

REMARKS
On the Several
ANSWERS

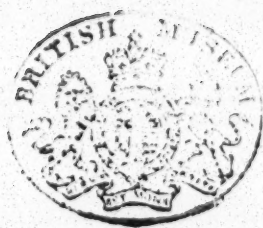
To the Pamphlet, intitl'd
*Christianity not founded
on Argument.*

WITH TWO LETTERS
TO
A LEARNED DIVINE
ON THE SAME
SUBJECT.

L O N D O N:

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PREFACE.

TRUTH is what all men should desire to know, and with meekness endeavour to defend, and promote ; more especially the christian truth, which is of the utmost importance to the souls of men, as it nearly concerns their present and future happiness. The favourable opportunity therefore, which the several answers to *Christianity not founded on Argument*, presented, I have endeavoured to improve by writing the remarks here published, from the same motives, and with the same views, by which I was excited to print my supplement to the sermons preached against Popery, at *Salters-Hall*. Nor shall I make any other apology for the matter of them ; and as to the manner of my writing them, I chose it, because I thought, the laying such a number of quotations together, was the most likely way of carrying conviction into the consciences of the respective authors ; and might perhaps have a better effect upon their admirers and followers, than if I had written a treatise upon the subject in any other form.

The very few alterations, or the small additions by me in some places made to their words, have in no respect weakened the force of their arguments ; so that if they were thought sufficiently conclusive in defence of Christianity in general, I think they must also be allowed of equal weight in that particular part of it, to which I have applied them. And, therefore, as those writers value the welfare, and true interest of christian societies, or would put a stop to the cavils and objections of unbelievers, against the christian religion, from the practice of infant-sprinkling ; and thereby prevent

the further growth of infidelity; as they desire to be accounted consistent Protestants, and would promote real and unadulterated Christianity, in order to please God the great author of it; I hope, they will now see the necessity there is of a reformation, from all such human *traditions*, by which *the commandments of God* are made void; and, as a motive to induce them more speedily to set about this good work, which will greatly tend to their own credit and true interest, I commit these remarks, with the following letters, to their most serious and christian consideration.

The letters were written in answer to an objection against certain persons submitting to Christ's institution of baptism, which arose in the mind of a very pious and learned divine, author of two volumes of sermons lately published; which were preached in a course of lectures before, and after, his obedience to that sacred ordinance. For when he had got over the arguments urged in Mr. *Emlyn's* previous question, and some other objections, his submission to that great duty was a long time deferred from this thought: That *baptism, being an ordinance of the introductory kind, was, as such, designed only for those, who had never been admitted to the privileges of the christian church; and therefore could not be properly administered to any, who had taken on them the christian profession, and, in consequence of that, had been admitted to the holy communion; tho' as he confessed to me, in a very irregular and unjustifiable way and manner. For he declared, that he looked upon the sprinkling, which was given him in his infancy, as nothing, and did not scruple to own himself, an unbaptized minister of the gospel; and had several times said, that the reason, why he forbore communicating at the Lord's table for several years, was, because, being unbaptized, he was not, as such, qualified to receive the Lord's-supper.*

He applied to two eminent ministers for satisfaction in the case above-mentioned, but one of them

was

was too long silent ; and tho' the other sent him an excellent sermon or two, which have since been printed, and also writ him a pretty long letter ; yet mistaking his objection the difficulty still remained, as Mr. — informed him, desiring his further thoughts, which were deferred for a long time, either thro' absence from home, or an application to other affairs: and therefore not obtaining from those worthy ministers the desired satisfaction, he was pleased to tell me, *I had time and leisure, and he wished I would undertake it.* With this request I was at last induced to comply, merely, that I might prevent the ill consequences of their silence.

What he was pleased to say of my letter in conversation, made it known to other persons, and some of my friends requested me *to favour them with a sight, or bearing of what I had written to him ;* since which I have been desired by several persons to print that with the subsequent letter. But tho' the solicitation of friends has very often been given by authors, as the reason for sending their writings abroad ; yet I could not esteem it sufficient to justify this publication, if I did not also think with them, that it might in some measure subserve the cause of truth. For which reason only I have submitted them to the public, hoping they may become useful towards checking the growth of an opinion, which I find some very able ministers, from a mistaken notion of charity, arising from mere good nature, complaisance, or private friendship, seem somewhat desirous to promote. They may hope perhaps to establish the reputation of Christianity, and prevent some attacks from the Deists or others, by uniting Christians of all denominations in communion together ; but discern not, that they are thereby giving them a much greater advantage, by sapping one or more of the very *foundation principles of the doctrine of Christ, Heb. vi. 1, 2 ;* by taking away the fences and destroying

stroying the very boundary, which Christ himself has made. But more of this hereafter.

Dr. *Wall*, in his History of infant-baptism, and in his Defence of the same, says; ' That all the
' ancient Christians (without the exception of one
' man) do understand that rule of our Saviour,
' *John* iii. 5. to mean baptism; and that *he* believes
' *Calvin* to be the first man that ever denied it so
' to be meant.' This is so full an attestation to the universal judgment of all antiquity for 14 or 1500 years in favour of the sense, which I have given of *John* iii. 3, 5, that I could not avoid transcribing it for my readers.

And this is further confirmed by the learned Dr. *Whitby*, who in his annotations says; ' That
' to see the kingdom of God here, and to enter into it,
' ver. 5. is the same thing, and both these phrases
' signify to be a real member of that kingdom, and
' to enjoy the blessings belonging to them who are
' so; . . . That Christ seems to speak this not prima-
' rily of that heavenly kingdom, into which the
' blessed shall enter at the day of judgment, but
' of that spiritual kingdom which was to be erect-
' ed by the Messiah; and into which men entered
' by baptism; whence it must follow, that no
' man is indeed a member of Christ's kingdom,
' who is not truly regenerate. . . . That this seems
' to be directed against the false and pernicious
' conceptions of the *Jewish* doctors, the Scribes
' and Pharisees, who thought they had a title to
' the kingdom of God, and the blessings of it,
' as being the seed of *Abraham* according to the
' flesh.' . . . And on the fifth verse,

' That our Lord here speaks of baptismal re-
' generation, the whole christian church from the
' beginning hath always taught, and that with very
' good reason; for, first, tho' water is sometimes
' put to signify, or represent the purifying opera-
' tions

† Hist. 572. Defence, p. 11.

tions of the holy spirit, yet to be born of water
 is a phrase never used in scripture, for being
 born of the spirit; but very properly is it used
 of that baptism, which is the laver of regenera-
 tion, *Tit.* iii. 5. and was by all the antients stiled,
παλιγγενεσία, or regeneration. Secondly, . . . to
 be baptized with water and the Holy Ghost, most
 likely signifies to be baptized with the Holy
 Ghost, and with the symbol of water. Thirdly,
 The question betwixt Christ and *Nicodemus* was
 about that which was requisite to fit a man to
 enter into the kingdom, that is, the church of
 God, and make him partaker of the blessings of
 the gospel. Now it is certain that baptism by wa-
 ter is, by our Lord, declared to be the ordinary
 means of entering into his kingdom, for he
 saith, *Mark* xvi. 16. *He that believeth and is bap-*
tized shall be saved; . . . Christ therefore here de-
 clares it to be a rite necessary for the entrance of
 adult persons into his kingdom, and it seems
 highly reasonable to esteem so of it; for what
 salvation can be expected by them, who, after
 he hath told them they must be baptized with
 water, that they may enter into his kingdom,
 do by refusing that sacrament too plainly shew
 that they refuse that way of entering into his
 kingdom, and becoming his disciples, which he
 had appointed for that end?

Dr. *Benson* also, for I am told, he hath had the
 degree of doctor in divinity conferred upon him
 by one of the Universities in *Scotland* since these
 remarks were written, has in his book, intitled,
The Reasonableness of the Christian Religion, paraphras-
 ed these words of Christ to *Nicodemus*, *Except a man*
be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God, of
 his publicly taking upon him the profession of
 the christian religion, by baptism; or else he
 could not see the kingdom of God, could not
 become a member of Christ's church, or king-
 dom; which he further illustrates and confirms
 from

from the fifth verse. And as he there takes it for the true meaning and intention of our Lord, the sense most easily defended against the cavils of an infidel ; he cannot, I think, well object against the use I have made of it, and the inferences drawn from thence in my letter.

Dr. *Benson* is very justly esteemed by many persons for his writings, who, no doubt, will think it no small recommendation of my exposition, that it is approved by him. Therefore, tho' the passage is pretty long, yet I will give it my readers ; whereby they may also see, what groundless suppositions, even the doctor himself is ready to make from *Nicodemus's* ignorant answer to Christ, in order to support a favourite opinion. He says, page 247,

‘ Our Saviour’s conversation with *Nicodemus* is
 ‘ the most just and proper, provided we attend to
 ‘ his character, and to all the circumstances. He
 ‘ was a Pharisee, and laboured under the com-
 ‘ mon prejudices of the *Jews*, and as he was a
 ‘ ruler among them, and of a timorous temper,
 ‘ he came to Jesus by night ; however he owned
 ‘ his miracles, and thence inferred his divine mis-
 ‘ sion ; most probably taking him for the Mes-
 ‘ siah. “ Jesus let him know that coming to
 ‘ him by night was not sufficient, neither had he,
 ‘ as a *Jew*, any right to be a member of the mes-
 ‘ siah’s kingdom, but he must, like other profe-
 ‘ lytes (in the *Jewish* phrase) be born again, or pub-
 ‘ licly take upon him the profession of the chris-
 ‘ tian religion, by baptism ; or else he could not
 ‘ see the kingdom of God, could not become a
 ‘ member of Christ’s church, or kingdom.” *Ni-*
 ‘ *codemus* thought himself already one of the peo-
 ‘ ple of God, because he was a *Jew*. If our Sa-
 ‘ viour had told him that an heathen, in order to
 ‘ become a profelyte to the *Jewish* religion, must
 ‘ be born again, by baptism and circumcision, he
 ‘ could have readily understood him ; because
 ‘ that

' that was their usual phraseology for the initiating of heathen profelytes into the *Jewish* religion.
 ' But that he, a *Jew*, and (as such) already one of the people of God, should have occasion for being initiated, like a heathen profelyte, was what he could not understand. He therefore, could think of no other meaning to Jesus's words, but the literal meaning; and yet was surprized to hear him talk of being born again, in the natural sense.'

All that is here pretended from *Nicodemus's* answer is a mere supposition, not only without the least evidence from any authentic history, but also quite contrary to reason. For, if there had been any such *profelyte baptism amongst the Jews, before and in our Saviour's time*; and which *they were every day making use of*, as Dr. *Benson* pretends: no common *Jew*, much less a ruler, and master in *Israel*, could ever have been so *surprised*, and so much at a loss, how to understand our Lord; and therefore, must have returned a much better answer to him. Such, as this, would naturally have occurred to mind. ' I know very well that it is common and usual, even daily, for heathen profelytes to be initiated into our religion by baptism and circumcision; but, as we are the people of God, circumcised *Jews* already, can there be any reason or any occasion for us to be baptized, as well as profelytes.' This, upon the doctor's supposition, would have been the most ready and the most natural reply, when Christ told him, he *must be born again, or he could not see the kingdom of God*: but by the answer which *Nicodemus* gave, he appears to be so far from knowing any thing at all about *Jewish* profelyte baptism; or of having the least notion of any such thing, that the only idea, which he had, of being born again, was entirely confined to that of the natural birth; and it is remarkable also, that his answer universally extends to all men, whether Heathen or *Jews*; for

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he says, not, how can I, or how can a *Jew*, but, *How can a MAN be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?* which therefore is a strong presumptive proof, that no such *Jewish* proselyte baptism was ever heard of by him. It is a thing vastly incredible, that a ruler, and master in *Israel* should be quite ignorant of it, if there then was, or had ever been, any such practice amongst the *Jews*, and so very common, that they *were daily making use of it*. This passage of scripture therefore, and the other six, I produced in my supplement, afford so many convincing arguments against this opinion, which has not one text, nor any other good authority to support it, that one would think it should never be admitted by any Christians, who seriously consider them.

‘ But Dr. *Benson* proceeds: “ Jesus explained
 ‘ himself, and confirmed what he had said, assur-
 ‘ ing him that unless a man (even a *Jew*) were re-
 ‘ gularly initiated into his church, or born of wa-
 ‘ ter and of the spirit, he could not see (or enter
 ‘ into) the kingdom of God. And, from the his-
 ‘ tory of the *Acts* of the apostles, and their epis-
 ‘ tles, we accordingly find, that that was the
 ‘ way, in which *Jews*, as well as other persons,
 ‘ were initiated into the christian church, being
 ‘ first baptized with water, and then with the Holy
 ‘ Spirit. (See, besides many other places, *Acts* ii.
 ‘ 38. and viii. 12. &c. and xix. 1. &c.) Our Saviour
 ‘ goes on to say, ver. 6. Being born of the flesh,
 ‘ being a *Jew* by birth, did not initiate him into
 ‘ the christian church; neither would it have done
 ‘ so, if it had been ever so often repeated. But
 ‘ being born of water and of the spirit, would
 ‘ initiate him into the spiritual dispensation. *Ni-*
 ‘ *codemus*, deeply tinctured with the *Jewish* preju-
 ‘ dices, was very much astonished at Jesus’s talk.
 ‘ Our Lord observed it, and said unto him, Mar-
 ‘ vel not that I said unto you, that you (*Jews*)
 ‘ must be born again. And then ver. 8. he at-
 ‘ tacks

‘ racks another *Jewish* prejudice in *Nicodemus*, and
 ‘ intimated that the *Gentiles* should be called into
 ‘ the kingdom of God, under the Messiah, and
 ‘ should enjoy equal privileges; the wind bloweth
 ‘ were it pleaseth, and you hear the sound there-
 ‘ of, but cannot tell whence it cometh and whi-
 ‘ ther it goeth; (you cannot tell all the points
 ‘ from whence it cometh, nor to how many points
 ‘ it steereth its course; but it appeareth, from the
 ‘ sound, and other effects of it, that it bloweth to
 ‘ and from all points of the compass) so is every
 ‘ one that is born of the spirit; so shall men come
 ‘ from all parts of the world, from every point
 ‘ of the compass, and (by being baptized with
 ‘ water and with the spirit) be initiated as profe-
 ‘ lytes to my religion: or (as our Saviour elsewhere
 ‘ expressed the same thing) they shall come from
 ‘ the east, and from the west, from the north,
 ‘ and from the south; and shall sit down in the
 ‘ kingdom of God. This additional discovery
 ‘ increased *Nicodemus*’s surprise, and he said unto
 ‘ him, how can these things be? Jesus, with the
 ‘ greatest propriety, answered, are you a master
 ‘ in *Israel*, and know not these things? Can you
 ‘ be ignorant of your own phrases, in which be-
 ‘ ing born again signifies proselytism; and which
 ‘ you are every day using, concerning heathens
 ‘ coming over to your religion? And, why can-
 ‘ not you understand the same phrases, when ap-
 ‘ plied to *Jews* entering into my church? And,
 ‘ can you (a master in *Israel*) be ignorant of God’s
 ‘ design to accept the *Gentiles*, as his people, under
 ‘ the Messiah, when, your ancient prophets have,
 ‘ in many places and clearly, spoken of this re-
 ‘ markable event? I could easily go on to shew
 ‘ you, how our Saviour attacked some other of
 ‘ *Nicodemus*’s prejudices; intimating that he was to
 ‘ be crucified; and that they were wrong in ex-
 ‘ pecting a temporal triumphant prince, when the

‘ prophets had foretold a spiritual, suffering Messiah ; and that the heathen world was not to be condemned, but saved, by his coming. But enough has been said, to shew that this text doth not prove that for which your author hath alledged it.’

The doctor might, perhaps, take up this groundless opinion of *Jewish* profelyte baptism, upon the credit of such Christians, who had before imbibed it from *Jewish* fables, without thoroughly examining the foundation, upon which it stands, as he might have done. But I have shewn in my supplement, that there is no clear evidence, nor express mention of such a thing in any of their books, till the *Gemara*, a part of the *Jewish* Talmud, not written till five or six hundred years after our blessed Lord ; much too late to be regarded, if the authority of it was not at the lowest ebb imaginable. For the supposition grounded upon the *mischna* in the third century, which is the first pretended proof, may only relate to bathing for purification from the blood of circumcision, with which, thro’ their superstitious delusion, they might then pretend the patient was defiled : tho’, as it was no natural purgation, but arose solely from the divine command, it could not be attended with any kind of pollution, or uncleanness, to need a purification. And according to the law of *Moses*, the sprinkling or striking with blood, was so far from polluting, that it was the most solemn purification ; whereby not only the people, but also the priests, their garments, the sanctuary, with all the vessels of the ministry, and even the book of the law itself, were sanctified or hallowed, *Exod.* xxiv. 6—8. ch. xix. 20, 21. *Levit.* iv. 6, 17, 18. ch. viii. 15, 30. ch. xvi. 14, 20. ch. xvii. 11. *Heb.* ix. 7, 13, 19—22. And there is no mention in scripture, that any kind of pollution attended the blood of circumcision ; or the least, most distant hint, that any manner of purification by water was

was necessary to prepare the patient for circumcision, any more than for cleansing him after it ; no account that any such thing was practised, when *Abraham*, at the command of God, circumcised himself and all the males of his family, *Gen.* xvii. 23—27 ; or when he circumcised his son *Isaac*, the year after, upon the eighth day, *Gen.* xxi. 4. Nor do we read, that the child of *Moses* was bathed in water, when *Zipporah his wife*, who was no *Jewess*, circumcised it with a sharp stone. *Exod.* iv. 25 ; or those many thousands of *Israel* circumcised by *Joshua*, at the bill of foreskins, after their forty years travel in the wilderness, *Joshua* v. 2—9 ; tho' it is reasonable to suppose that many of them were polluted by the idolatries, for which so many thousands had been cut off, as well as by their other sins. Neither was there any thing of this kind appointed by the Lord, when he gave to the *Jews*, by *Moses* and *Aaron*, the law for circumcising of proselytes, and their families, *Exod.* xii. 48 ; where, if it had been the will of God, it must certainly have been expressly mentioned. For the precepts of the *Jewish* law, concerning their religious rites, are so very particular, and exact in every thing, that they are often repeated over and over again, to prevent any mistake in the one, or any omission in performance of the other. And therefore to be sure nothing of the divine will so very essential, as to be made the plan of christian baptism afterwards, could ever be wholly omitted by *Moses* ; who, we are assured, was a faithful servant ; and told the children of *Israel*, according to all that the Lord commanded him, *Num.* xxix. 40. *Heb.* iii. 5. ch. viii. 5. And moreover, it is remarkable, that in the command of God for circumcising proselytes and their families, it is expressly said, that one law shall be to him that is home born, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you, *Exod.* xii. 48, 49. Nor was there any such thing practised or required of the *Shechemites*, when they were circumcised,

cised, *Gen.* xxxiv. 24 ; where, if it had been at all necessary for proselytes, we might reasonably have expected the mention of it : so that our Pædobaptist brethren have not the least shadow of evidence, either in the Old or New Testament, to support this *Jewish* fable, on which they build so much. But, on the contrary, every thing we meet with there relating either to circumcision, or baptism, is clearly and plainly against them ; and all the proofs, which they have yet been able to produce for *Jewish* proselyte baptism, before and in our Saviour's time, and for several hundred years afterwards, are no better than Dr. *Benson's* supposition from *Nicodemus's* answer to Christ ; where the manner of expression, the circumstances of things, compared with the positive and clear expressions of the *Jewish* Rabbins, in that and some following ages, are a sufficient and evident proof of the direct contrary : that they never had any such initiatory baptism, as is pretended, amongst them, and therefore if the doctor had ever thoroughly searched into these things, it may be presumed, that he would never have endeavoured to propagate, amongst his readers, the belief of *Jewish* proselyte baptism, before and in our Saviour's time. But I have given a more full and particular account of this *Jewish* fable, in my supplement, and in my answer to Mr. *Emlyn's* previous question, from the writings of the learned Dr. *Gale*, who was as able to search into, as careful to find out the truth, and to know the foundation of this groundless conceit as any man, and whose testimonies and arguments upon that head were never yet confuted. To them I refer my readers, and shall only add here, that for any thing, which has ever yet appeared, notwithstanding all the labour and pains taken by our Pædobaptist brethren to establish this notion of *Jewish* proselyte baptism, it stands upon the bare authority of talmudical books, not composed till several hundred years after Christ, and
stuffed

stuffed with blasphemies, full of stupid infatuation, and wild romance ; and upon whose credit, if it was not invalidated by what has been already *published*, no man, who wishes not to be imposed upon, would ever rely. And are these principles, from which to deduce duties of religion ; on which to found positive institutions of God ? If *Jewish* legends are to be the ground work of christian duties, the whole face of the gospel may in time be so mangled, and disfigured, as to bare nothing at all of the aspect of primitive, and unadulterate Christianity.

All that is between the hooks from [How Christians can think p. 103. to, it is remarkable that] p. 104. And also from [Moreover all such persons, p. 106 to, divine displeasure] p. 108 was not in the original letters. The passages from the apostolical constitutions, and Justin Martyr, inserted in the latter addition, witness to the truth and justness of my own reasoning ; whereby the reader may see, I have the best antiquity on my side, a thing not to be despised by any wise or considerate man, when corresponding with the scriptures themselves.

I have also added the word visible in some places, and an expression, or two besides, more clearly to determine my sense, and prevent any misconstruction of my words. And if any reader should think my arguments in some places bare too hard upon such communicants, as are unbaptized ; or on those, who communicate with others, whom they know and believe to be so ; or upon any other denomination of Christians, who are not of the Baptist persuasion ; I hope his candour will acquit me of uncharitableness, when he considers my caution, in restraining my arguments to the state of the christian church here on earth. And I am persuaded my charity is as great for those, who differ in opinion from me, as any Christian's is, or ought to be ; tho' I cannot be so complaisant to any, as to give up the interest of truth ; and countenance them in a corruption, or neglect of any one of my Lord's commands or institutions. And I doubt not, but they would readily acknowledge this ; if I should ever publish, what I wrote many years ago, upon the unlawfulness of imposing human articles, creeds, or explanations of scripture, or of separation for mere difference in opinion ; and therefore all I have here said ought wholly to be imputed to a laudable zeal in me for the cause of truth ; which God grant I may never be ashamed or afraid to appear in, according to my ability. And if I am but so happy, as to be any ways serviceable thereto ; and at the same time retain the favourable sentiments of my readers, agreeable to what I bespoke, in my first letter, of the reverend minister, at whose request it was written, it is all I desire.

CONTENTS.



CONTENTS.

Part the First.

Remarks on the several Answers to the Pamphlet, intituled *Christianity not founded on Argument*.

The Introduction,	Page 1
Sect. I. Remarks on the <i>Cambridge</i> Letter,	p. 17
Sect. II. Remarks on the <i>Oxford</i> Reply,	p. 27
Sect. III. Remarks on the Office of Baptism in the Kirk of <i>Scotland</i> , and the <i>English</i> Directory by the Assembly of Divines,	p. 32
Sect. IV. Remarks on Mr. <i>Mole's</i> Grounds of the christian Faith rational,	p. 40
Sect. V. Remarks on Dr. <i>Doddridge's</i> Letters,	p. 51
Sect. VI. Remarks on Dr. <i>Leland's</i> Letters,	p. 67
Sect. VII. Remarks on Mr. <i>Benson's</i> Dialogue, intituled <i>The Reasonableness of the Christian Religion</i> ,	p. 76
The Conclusion,	p. 85

Part the Second.

The Necessity of Baptism, in order to Church Membership, and Christian Communion, p. 97

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E R R A T A.

PAGE 23, line 28, for *them any*, read, *the many* ;
p. 86. l. 10, read, *religion* ; *that* ; p. 88, l. 13,
read *endued* ; p. 111, l. 30, for *there*, read, *their*.



REMARKS
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INTRODUCTION.



THE positive duties of our holy religion are equally sacred, and demand from us, if we are from conviction Christians, and, in decency of character, if we are only nominal, nay, if we are hypocritical, and merely mercenary Christians, the same outward regard and strict observation, as those which are moral and unchangeable. Tho' they are not of the same importance and intrinsic dignity, they are, and must be, equally inviolable, because there is but one enacting authority

thority With respect to the laws both of nature and revelation : and tho' the former may be received as fit rules of conduct, they can never be obeyed as laws of government, but upon the very same foundation and ground of authority. For nature cannot be superior to God, because it is the constitution and creature of God ; it can therefore have no pretence to controul his will supernaturally revealed : for in both cases the wisdom is the same, and the right of governing the same. A Christian therefore must yield exact obedience to the positive institutions of the christian doctrine on the self-same principle, on which he thinks it his duty to conform from motives of religion, or acknowledgment and suitable veneration of the supreme Deity, to the eternal and universal rules of virtue and morality.

When therefore any of us, acknowledging the authority of Christ, and the divinity and truth of his religion, live in the omission of any positive duty, which he, in the name of God, and as invested with his supreme authority, has enjoined upon us, we act in such a manner, as is not only absolutely inconsistent with the character we assume, and should think it our honour to bear, of being his disciples, but in a way that is a contradiction to itself, and to all the natural principles of reason. For there is no one clearer and more certain principle of everlasting and unalterable right within the whole extent and scope of moral duty, than this, that the omnipotent creator and sovereign ruler, whose dominion is unlimited, and who is perfect in wisdom, and in all moral excellence, should be revered, honoured, and obeyed in all his laws, in all the discoveries and declarations of his will, whether by the voice of nature, or by extraordinary methods of revelation. And in no one point can there be the least just ground to object, without supposing that he is a capricious, arbitrary, tyrannical being, who is not in the abstract propriety and truth of things fit to be obeyed, nor, consequently, without entirely dissolving, together with every instituted tie, the religion of nature and reason itself. Nor ought the base and slavish principle of public shame, or a sordid secular interest, to have any influence in an affair of such vast importance, as that of preserving an uncorrupted probity of mind, and approving our fidelity to God. They should neither suspend, nor controul and limit, the free scope of our enquiries, nor prevent our renouncing error, however popular and long established,

ed, upon a full conviction of the understanding, and making a public profession of the truth, however despised and loaded with reproach and ignominy. Such an ingenuous and open conduct has something so great, so praiseworthy and generous in it, that almost all will find themselves constrained by nature, and the universal ingrafted sentiment of what is right and excellent, to approve, what but few have the piety and resolution to imitate.

The ordinance of baptism is a duty entirely christian, and a matter of mere instituted service, ordained indeed not wantonly, for the display of power, and the prerogatives of sovereign rule, but wisely calculated to subserve the great purposes of virtue, and the ultimate end of all true religion. And as the obligation of it results wholly from the will of God the supreme lawgiver, the original plan of institution ought, in every circumstance, to be strictly observed, and inflexibly adhered to. To annul, is to degrade and oppose the authority of God: to alter, is, so far as the alteration extends, the same as to annul. Circumstances may possibly happen here, as in the case of all other positive services, that will excuse, for a time at least, from the actual performance of this duty; but no situation, no plea of inconvenience, can justify our introducing and substituting a human ordinance in the place of a divine. But whenever such changes are attempted and complied with, the act immediately loses the nature of piety, and is converted into gross superstition. The piety is evacuated by departing from the command of God, which alone can constitute a religious obligation; and the superstition plainly appears, in that it is a service contrived and dictated by the blind conceit, folly, and arrogance of man, which is the general essential nature, and the proper character of all superstition. Let Christians therefore proceed calmly, discarding and utterly renouncing all prejudices, whether of education, custom, or interest; let them with candour and simplicity of mind, consider the account, which the new Testament gives of the ordinance of baptism, in which alone the primitive law, prescribing the practice of it, is authoritatively recorded; and upon which our judgment concerning it, if we are reasonable Christians or consistent Protestants, must be absolutely and wholly formed.

Had these sentiments always possessed the minds of Christians, those divisions and contentions, which have so long disturbed, distracted and rent the church

of Christ, had been prevented. And it is by such a conduct, and by that alone, that an happy end must be put to them; for hereby we should soon become one flock, and one fold, under *Christ Jesus the great shepherd and bishop of our souls*, 1 Pet. ii. 25. This indeed is what the ignorant zealot, the mad and wild enthusiast have had in view: for the accomplishing of this, the most wicked and injurious proceedings have been begun and carried on by them, with the utmost rage and fury, against the most sincere, pious and conscientious Christians; for no other reason in the world, but because they differed from them in the practice of some religious duties, or could not assent to such perplexed propositions, as they were pleased to impose as the orthodox faith. Fire and faggot, with all manner of cruelty and bloodshed, have been the hellish means made use of by some to convince men of what those tyrants and murderers were pleased to call the true christian faith; whilst fines and imprisonment, and all kinds of oppression, have been the tender mercies of others, and the method they pursued for informing the understanding, and establishing uniformity in faith and worship. “ Many
 “ and just [says the *Cambridge Gentleman*, tho’ he pleads
 “ for the magistrate’s power in favour of truth] have been
 “ the complaints against this method and manner of proceeding. Meek, mild and merciful, was the behaviour of the great author of our religion; and of the same nature, all his precepts and directions. But severe and inhuman have many laws been, and they have been executed with unrelenting rigour, as necessary supports to Christianity. Such have been the measures not only against its professed enemies, but against Christians of different distinctions and denominations. Barbarities, equally horrible with those which have raged among the most barbarous nations, have by this means been committed in the christian world.” But how far short all such measures are ever likely to be of producing this desirable end, the event hath sufficiently and fully proved. For which reason some ministers in our time, who are for promoting the same thing, tho’ in a very different way, think that there may be, and accordingly recommend, such a general union, that all Christians, under every denomination, may communicate together at the Lord’s table, notwithstanding their various conceptions concerning the doctrines of Christianity, and the different manner

¹ *Cambridge Letter*, p. 25, 26.

manner in which some pretend to administer baptism, as the ordinance of Christ. Indeed, if our differences subsisted only in the mind, then every one might possess his speculative truth entire, notwithstanding his brother's mistakes. For it is very common now in most assemblies, for Christians, who strictly believe in the divine unity, to communicate with those, who profess the Athanasian doctrine, with the same sincere piety in each, as if they were all of one mind in that controversy. And even at the Lord's table, I might receive the divine memorials of my Saviour's passion, with all the devotion and reverence, and with that just and rational idea of mind, which the scripture gives of it; whilst my brother and fellow Christian, who sat next me, might also receive it in remembrance of Christ; and yet, from a notion form'd in his mind, upon the letter of the word, and the wild dictates of others, be led to adore it as his God, and verily believe in his heart, that the elements of bread and wine, after consecration, were really transubstantiated into the body and blood of our Redeemer; and this without disturbing, or in the least discomposing each other in our devotions. Nor are there any points of doctrine, or articles of the christian faith, in which the conceptions and opinions of Christians can possibly differ more widely from each other, than they do in these, and therefore the like forbearance or allowance ought to be made for the weakness of my erring brother, with respect to them also: whereby the rights of private judgment will be inviolably maintained, agreeable to what the apostle saith; *Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God*, Rom. xiv. 22. And, *Him that is weak in the faith receive you, but not to doubtful disputations*, ver. 1.

But on the other hand, where our differences consist not merely in speculation, or the bare assent of our minds to any scripture truth; but also in matters of practice, or the manner, in which religious duties are to be performed, as the ordinances of God, and as the appointments of Christ himself, there our different and contrary proceedings must necessarily create confusion and disorder. Besides, it would be most unreasonable to expect, that any man should openly countenance, and give public sanction to the performance of any act in the name of the Lord; which his conscience assures him is no other than a mere human appointment, or superstitious institution, whereby that of Christ is entirely subverted, and made
of

of no effect. In this case therefore every conscientious Christian must be so far from openly countenancing, or giving public sanction to such actions, or proceedings, that, on the contrary, his duty to God, and his allegiance to Christ, oblige him to bear a faithful testimony against all such corruptions, in order to maintain and uphold the authority of Christ, the honour and dignity of his laws, the restoration and establishment of the purity and truth of his institutions; and, as far as in him lies, the reformation of his brother from the error of his ways. And we are the more obliged to this, with respect to baptism, in that our Pædobaptist brethren cannot but justify us in our administration of that sacred ordinance, by acknowledging it was the primitive practice, the way by which believers were initiated in the apostles days; and as they cannot produce any divine authority for the alterations by them introduced, their own practice is at best no other than a church, I had like to have said Popish, tradition. And therefore, as I have shewn at large in my supplement, it is not we, but they themselves, who make the separation. They force us from them, and it is at their door only, that the sin of schism must lie; because two things Christ himself has made essential to the constitution of, and gathering of members into his, church. One is a firm belief of this great foundation article of the christian faith, that he is *Christ the Son of the living God*; for upon this rock, says he, *I will build my church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*, Matt. xvi. 16. On which see my supplement, p. 12. The other is, that such believers *be born of water and of the spirit*, without which, he assures us, *no man can see, or enter into, the kingdom of God*; on which see my first letter, and also Dr. *Whitby* and Mr. *Benson*, as quoted in my preface.

These therefore ought to be strictly observed, and punctually complied with by every Christian; and must also be inflexibly adhered to, and inviolably maintained by the christian church: which therefore she ought not to dispense with, so far as to admit persons to the rights and privileges thereof, who do not profess to believe the one, and have not manifested that faith in Christ, with their resolution of obedience to him, by submitting to the other; because all such persons are hereby strictly excepted or prohibited by Christ himself. For a society of Christians therefore to receive unbaptized persons into their communion, would be to countenance their unbelief and disobedience,

dience, and with respect to themselves, may be esteemed a despising the authority of Christ, a betraying, or giving up his institution, and a casting off their allegiance to him. And in the event, it would be so far from preventing reflections, and hindering deists from attacking christianity, that by our thus sapping one or two of the *foundation principles of the doctrine of Christ*, Heb. vi. 1, 2. and of our ourselves taking away the fences, and destroying the very boundary which Christ himself has made, which I apprehend would be the consequence of such an unnatural or unjustifiable union, we should thereby give infidels a much greater advantage against us, and our holy religion, than they can possibly have from the continuance of our distinct and separate communions.

For when deists observe, that Christians themselves make so very little account of Christ's most solemn institutions, or of the right administration of them, they may thence infer, and be led to think themselves fully justified in rejecting, or shewing as light an esteem for his doctrines; since if he was divinely inspired, and really came from God, all that he delivered, must be equally observed by his professed disciples and followers, who, as such, can never be absolved from a most strict and careful regard, and obedience to the whole of his institutions. Nor is it their duty to have this regard to Christ's institutions themselves only, but also to promote the same in others so far as they are able; which those Christians are very far from doing, who pretend that *professors of all denominations, nay, that persons unbaptized, may all communicate, or eat bread, and drink wine together at the Lord's table in remembrance of Christ*: which opinion, big with many evils, is neither founded on the word of God, nor the practice of the church in any age; nor yet upon the reason and nature of things, but only upon mere complaisance, under the false notion of manifesting their charity to other Christians. But surely our love and regard are due to Christ, to his institutions and laws, more than to any man, or body of men whatsoever; and therefore it must be very unjustifiable in us, to give up the former, for the sake of the latter, because, *he that loveth father, or mother, wife, or children, brethren, or sisters, or any thing, even his own life, more than Christ and his ways, is not worthy of him*. Math. x. 32—39. Luke xiv. 25—31. For as Mr. Benson observes,

‘ Mr,

² “ Mr. *Locke*, in his excellent treatise, of the reasonableness of the christian religion, &c.—has shewn that “ the one single proposition, which Christ and his Apostles made essential to being a Christian, is, that Jesus is the Christ, otherwise called the Messiah, the Son of God, or Saviour of men. Whoever, upon attending to the evidence, was convinced of this truth, acknowledged the belief of it, and took upon him the profession of this faith by baptism, was supposed sufficiently to have acknowledged Christ’s authority, and thereupon to be intitled to communion with any church, or Christian, upon the face of the earth. He had a title to all the privileges of being within the pale, and was looked upon as one that belonged to that one flock and one fold, which are united under Christ Jesus their common head and Lord.” And then he adds still further ;

³ “ But it is fundamental to the salvation of every man, that he be a sincere, honest, upright man, and that he inquire, and readily receive whatever he finds to be true, whether by reason or revelation. In acknowledging Jesus to be the Christ, he in effect takes him for Head and Lord, and thereby lays himself under obligation to receive whatever truths he can find that Christ has any way revealed, as well as to practise every duty which he has enjoined. And it would be so far renouncing his allegiance to Christ, and disowning his divine mission and authority, to reject any doctrine or precept, that is stamped with Christ’s authority. For that would, in all just construction, be to deny him to be the Christ, or a prophet and teacher sent from God.’

This is very justly expressed, and I heartily wish Mr. *Benson*, and all his Pædobaptist brethren, would for their own sakes uniformly act according to this sentiment of his, that we might no longer have occasion to retort their own words upon them, as a just rebuke for their not shewing that same regard and readiness to obey Christ’s authority in the great duty of baptism, which they so forcibly press upon their hearers and readers upon many other occasions : and which they can scarcely avoid giving room for, in almost every sermon they preach, and every book they

² *Mr. Benson’s Reasonableness of the Christian Religion*, p. 84. ³ *ibid.* p. 85.

they publish, either in defence of Christianity in general, or the several doctrines thereof in particular, against the various abuses and corruptions of them. And can they ever think, how justly their own arguments may be turned against them, and then seriously consider, *Rom. ii. 1, 2, 3, 11, 17,—21. Matt. xv. 3, 6, 9. and Mark vii. 7, 8, 9, 13.* without secretly wishing, with some concern, that we had no room, nor any occasion given for it. For are they not in this particular the very persons Mr. *Benson* speaks of? ⁴ Who, ‘ overlooking the evidences already ‘ afforded, are always cavilling and demanding new, or ‘ other sort of evidence: they catch at every specious appearance of an argument, or objection, to make themselves easy in rejecting truths of such importance; but ‘ are afraid of examining things to the bottom, lest they ‘ should be thereby condemned. Such are the reasons, ‘ which our Saviour has assigned, of mens want of faith ‘ in him and his gospel.’ Or, ⁵ *As the Oxford young Gentleman expresses himself,* ‘ Can you not discern a manifest difference between the behaviour of one son who accepts, and readily executes his father’s commands, conveyed to him by the instruments usual in such cases, ‘ and from which he can have no more than a moral certainty; and another who would believe neither his servant, nor his own hand-writing, unless he came to him ‘ himself in person to acquaint him with his will and pleasure. The difference is visible; and the reason of it is this. ‘ One case shews a will to obey; the other, a disposition ‘ to catch hold of every handle to excuse himself; which ‘ is the true essential distinction between a moral and an ‘ immoral man.’ And as Dr. *Doddridge* observes, ⁶ ‘ There ‘ might indeed be a third sort of persons, whose state was ‘ a medium between that of these, and of the scorers we mentioned before: I mean, such as were indolent ‘ about the matter; neither positively persuaded that ‘ Christianity’ [*and if applied to many Christians; that adult baptism*] ‘ was false, nor quite convinced that it ‘ was true, nor solicitous to bring their doubts to an issue; but concluding, that whether it were true or false, ‘ they might find out a path to happiness without it. This ‘ was probably the case of many [*formerly*], as it undoubtedly is the case of many in our days. Now such as these ‘ were not to be looked upon as fair enquirers, but as

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‘ triflers

⁴ Mr. *Benson*’s Reasonableness, &c. p. 9.

⁵ page 60.

⁶ Second Letter, p. 19, 20

‘ triflers in the most serious of all affairs ; and as acting
 ‘ the most absurd and inconsistent part : for as Christia-
 ‘ nity pretended to be a matter of the utmost importance,’
[and promises the pardon of sin, with the gift of the Holy
Ghost, to the adult subjects of baptism. Mark xvi. 16. Acts
ii. 38. and xxii 16] ‘ in neglecting it they acted as if it
 ‘ were assuredly false, while yet they confessed they knew
 ‘ not but it might be true. A conduct, which was ren-
 ‘ dered especially inexcusable by that grand apparatus,
 ‘ with which providence interposed to introduce it, which
 ‘ if it proved any thing at all concerning it, must prove
 ‘ it to be of infinite moment.’

For, ‘ It is not reasonable, *says Mr. Mole,* ⁷ to think,
 ‘ that God will oblige any man to be resolved, when he
 ‘ knows him to be destitute of the necessary means ; but
 ‘ if a man provided with those means, which an honest
 ‘ use of is sufficient to bring him to a clear determination,
 ‘ and he shall postpone all examination in a case, where
 ‘ the importance of the matter is inviting, and the autho-
 ‘ rity requiring it is competent ; and go on fluctuating in
 ‘ doubt all his days : what reason can we have to think
 ‘ hardly of God, if condemnation be the consequence of
 ‘ such a conduct, and the man was before informed of it
 ‘ as a motive of dissuasion’ ?

And in this view therefore, his description of the na-
 ‘ ture of true faith is worthy to be here introduced.
 ‘ Having considered, *says he,* ⁸ the causes, I proceed to
 ‘ consider the nature of faith. And by faith I mean such
 ‘ a belief of the mission and doctrine of Jesus Christ, as
 ‘ stands connected in a way of moral operation, with
 ‘ the exercise of repentance, and the subsequent practice
 ‘ of sincere virtue ; and leads into a compliance with
 ‘ every qualification, which Christ required for remission
 ‘ and salvation.’ [*Mark xvi. 16. Acts ii. 38. and ch. ix.*
17—20 compared with ch. xxii. 14—16.] ‘ Repentance
 ‘ and virtue [*or obedience*] were the great lessons, which he
 ‘ was sent to be a teacher of, and which faith was requir-
 ‘ ed as preparatory to their learning ; and for this reason,
 ‘ that it was, and so far forth as it was, the moral cause
 ‘ or instrument of leading men to the practice of those
 ‘ duties, was it in God’s appointment made the condition
 ‘ of his bestowing the blessings of remission and salvation
 ‘ on them. A faith, which is no way connected with
 ‘ these

⁷ *Grounds of the Christian Faith rational,* p. 73.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 15, 16.

‘ these things,’ [viz. *Such a faith as Infants are supposed to derive from their parents, or to have in their sponsors ; or that federal holiness which many of our Paedobaptists think necessary for their being sprinkled.*] ‘ When the use and excellence of that, which is required, consists in its being a mean of them, it can be of no service to any to have, or detriment to be without, and is not indeed worth disputing about ;’ [and therefore I hope *Infant-sprinkling, falsely called baptism, will no longer be contended for by them.*] But true faith is that principle, in virtue of which men enter into the practice of every moral duty, and into a right of inheritance to eternal felicity.’ [See supplement, p. 67, 68.] ‘ That faith stands thus connected, with virtue [or obedience] appears from almost every thing, that is said of it in the scriptures. It is sometimes called the holy faith, *Jude xx.* At other times we read of the obedience, and righteousness of faith ; *Rom. xvi. 26.* and *ch. iv. 13.* and also of faith being reckoned for righteousness, *Rom. iv. 5.* And that it bares this relation to eternal life, our Saviour declares : *John vi. 47. iii. 36. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he, who believeth in me, hath everlasting life.*’

I will leave this subject to my readers most serious consideration in the very words, with which Mr. *Benson* concludes his foregoing passage. 9 ‘ Less evidence would do, in many cases, if truth was more grateful. But, when men dislike the things to be proved, they are very unwilling to attend to, or allow the force of those arguments which are to convince them. It is evident mens wills, appetites, passions and inclinations, have great influence upon their faith. However, men ought to remember that things are obstinate, and will not alter with their wishes. And every wise man sees that the right way is coolly and carefully to consider what is proposed, however it may affect him ; and to receive the truth according to the importance and evidence of it. These are the things, which are previous to the assent of the mind, and are included in the scriptural notion of faith.’

My own short notes or explanations, in two of these passages, are distinguished by Italic, placed in hooks [...]. And as several other quotations from these answers may have occasion for some such short additions, or amendments ; so by the like marks, without any other notice,

my readers may know, when I have added to, or altered any words in them. But to return :

This opinion, that persons unbaptized may be admitted to christian communion, appears to me quite contrary to the nature of the Christian institution, which was to gather a church *out of the world*, John xv. 9, and to all the rules of society, as well as the known practice of the primitive church, in the purest ages of it ; and would of course be destructive of all discipline, an inlet to disorder and confusion, and some encouragement to licentiousness.

And herein I think Mr. *Benson* fully agrees with me, for he must believe in the perpetuity of baptism, and that it was designed for every Christian, in order to his becoming a member of Christ's visible church ; or I know not what he can mean, where he says, ' But, besides the moral duties, which are of eternal, unchangeable obligation, the positive ordinances of the christian religion were instituted as means and assistances to preserve men stedfast in the practice of those moral duties, which are unquestionably the weightier matters of the Law ; and, even these positive institutions are so free from all appearance of superstition and vanity, and so wisely fitted to the end for which they were designed, that no man can justly, or with any reason, object against the things themselves, tho' AGAINST THE CORRUPTIONS AND ABUSES OF THEM THERE HAS BEEN A BUNDANT REASON TO OBJECT. For what considerate and thinking man can pretend to say, that it is any way unreasonable or superstitious, for every member of any particular society, to be solemnly admitted into that society, by a plain and significant rite, intitling him to all the privileges, and charging him with all the obligations, which belong to the members of that society, as such ; which is the design of one of the christian sacraments ? Or that it is unreasonable and superstitious, frequently and with thankfulness to commemorate the love of their greatest benefactor, who condescended even to lay down his life for them ; and thereupon humbly and solemnly to renew their obligations to him ; which is the design of the other.'

I have formerly shewn in my supplement, p. 67, 68, what the true nature, use and design of baptism is ; and having therein set forth the advantages, which Pædobaptist Protestants give the Papists, by departing from the scripture

¹ Ibid. p. 25, 26.

scripture rule, and complying with their tradition, in sprinkling infants, I then added, " May it not be justly feared, that deists observing men, who profess a sacred regard to the scriptures, and yet nevertheless contradicting them in so plain a case as the positive institution of baptism, may thereby be tempted to think such men only pretend to believe the scriptures, but in their hearts do not believe them? Or if they do in reality believe them to be of divine authority, and yet deviate from one of the plainest precepts thereof, it is not to be supposed that those, who are in doubt of that authority, can ever be prevailed upon by such persons to receive and acknowledge them as a guide to eternal happiness; but, on the contrary, may by this means be confirmed in their infidelity. Protestants therefore should well consider, that by their practice of infant-sprinkling they weaken the force of all their arguments against deism." And I now find my apprehensions were but too just. For, they are so strongly pushed upon this point by a late writer, not only suspected of deism, but publicly charged with being an *Infidel*, ² *the most wily enemy of the Christian religion*, that the members of our two Universities, those renowned seminaries of literature, and some eminent ministers amongst the dissenting Pædobaptists, in their several defences of Christianity against what he advanced, have all in effect been compelled to give up infant-baptism, if indeed they have any such thing amongst them, asserting unanimously as follows: ³ That it is no where *expressly revealed in the New Testament, the forms and modes of worship, the manner of administering the sacraments, the definitions and decrees relating to doctrines, as far as they are human appointments, do not belong to our consideration, with original Christianity only is our present concern.* ⁴ *The reason of the infants themselves is no way concerned in it. They have no reason, nor are they therefore capable of religion.* ⁵ *An absurdity which the christian religion, or the rational believers of it, have nothing further to do with than to disown and disavow, as a heap of absurdities, gathered from some modern formulas of religious doctrines, or the modern practice of some religious societies, which are for the most part full of them, and falsely charged upon Christianity.*

² Mr. Moles's Grounds, &c. p. 54. ³ Cambridge Letter, p. 5.
⁴ Oxford Reply, p. 7. ⁵ Mr. Moles's Grounds, p. 56.

anity. ⁶ But I am very confident, the scripture, by which the merits of this cause are to be tried, teaches nothing of this kind. Nor from any thing we could have met with there, could we ever have thought of it. ⁷ But as to those who hold such opinions, and make use of such forms, let them answer for them. Such things do not appear to me to be according to the pleasure and ordinance of God himself in this point. . . . The New Testament itself is a stranger to any such sentiments, or practices; and therefore Christianity is not, in the least, affected by this objection. These are some of their own expressions concerning infant-baptism, in answer to what this wily Infidel said upon the subject; whose words Mr. Benson in his *Dialogue* has thus introduced, p. 94.

‘ But there is an objection, p. 9. which is repeated, p. 69. and which it will require all your skill to resolve,’ viz. “ Can a man be baptized into a rational religion? “ Or, where is reason concerned, when babes accept “ the terms of salvation by deputy, and are intitled to “ all the privileges of the most extensive faith by another’s act? By the baptismal ceremony, they commence true believers at once, and are made heirs of “ heaven, by the faith of their bondsmen, while as yet “ they have not the least share or symptom of understanding themselves; and, they cannot well give a rational assent by proxy. Yet such is the pleasure and ordinance “ of God himself in this point. And p. 69. he inquires, “ can any thing be more natural, upon hearing of a rational faith, than to interrogate, with the greatest simplicity, after our church-catechism; why, then, are “ infants baptized; when by reason of their tender age, “ they cannot possibly pretend to know any thing of the “ matter? For they article without knowing it, to believe they know not what: and this act, which is properly no act at all, is received as something to all intents and purposes compleat in itself, and comprising the “ whole sum and extent of a just persuasion. Their “ living longer, to be capable to be informed what it is “ they have promised to believe, may possibly endanger, “ but cannot add to, the terms of their contracted happiness. The merits of the most finished conviction are “ already theirs by imputation. Their claim to heaven “ stands

⁶ Dr. Doddridge’s *Third Letter*, p. 55, 57. ⁷ Mr. Benson’s *Dialogue*, p. 96, 97.

“ stands already allowed. And millions are accordingly,
 “ we know, actually saved upon the strength of the
 “ mere ceremony, without ever having had the capacity
 “ of exerting one single thought upon that, or any other
 “ subject. So far are they all the while of knowing any
 “ thing why, that they do not so much as know what
 “ they believe ; or indeed, that they do believe any thing
 “ at all.” ‘ Now, is not this a most formidable argument
 ‘ against a rational faith ; in as much as they have allowed
 ‘ it impossible to believe without ideas, or understanding ;
 ‘ and consequently impossible to give a rational assent by
 ‘ proxy.’

This objection is not formed against the private opinions and practice of particular Christians only, but against the judgment and established ordinances of several Churches ; whose most learned divines profess to believe and practise infant-baptism, as a right appointed for admitting children members of the church of Christ ; and these children, when they are grown up, are many of them taught to believe, that they were thereby *made members of Christ, the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven*. This ceremony, as it has been so eagerly and so zealously contended for, by almost the whole christian world for several ages, so from hence alone our modern Infidels, who are not over careful in their examinations of scripture, to distinguish and find out, which opinions and practices amongst Christians are really taught there, and which only pretended to be so, may be willing to believe and take for granted, that these things are indeed what Christ himself taught, and what the scriptures set forth, as many weak Christians do to this day. And from thence apprehending a considerable advantage given them against Christianity, they have here laid fast hold of it. And therefore I hope those Christians, who give them such a handle against themselves, will now consider it, and act suitably to what the nature of this attack requires and demands from them. For as Mr. *Benson* observes,

‘ Such repeated attacks upon rational Christianity
 ‘ must of course lead rational believers to a more careful
 ‘ and exact inquiry into the nature and evidences of their
 ‘ faith ; which cannot fail of ending to the advantage of
 ‘ truth and virtue. It is possible that, upon examination,
 ‘ it may be found that Christians have mixed some of their
 ‘ own private sentiments with the pure doctrine of Christ.

‘ And,

‡ *Preface to his Dialogue, p. 5.*

‘ And, as such things cannot be defended, they had much
 ‘ better part with them, [*and infant-baptism in particular,*
 ‘ *as his answer to this objection shews*] than give up rati-
 ‘ onal Christianity, or load it with those difficulties, which
 ‘ afford the most plausible objections against it; tho’ in
 ‘ reality they do not belong to it. Such authors as this
 ‘ (whatever be their design) will, perhaps in the issue,
 ‘ help us to get rid of such difficulties and incumbrances,
 ‘ which is, doubtless, a very desirable thing.’

Besides, as Mr. *Mole* very justly observes, when treat-
 ing of Christian education; ⁹ ‘ Reviewing the grounds of
 ‘ our knowledge and conduct, so far from misbecoming
 ‘ us, will be what we shall be disposed to by such an edu-
 ‘ cation, and what we are not only allowed at any one
 ‘ particular time, but obliged to do often, over and over
 ‘ again, as long as we live. How far imposture and hu-
 ‘ man imposition might suffer by their votaries taking
 ‘ such a liberty, is easily seen; and why those, who are
 ‘ for supporting them, should be apprehensive and fear-
 ‘ ful from it: but christian faith and virtue must take
 ‘ firmer hold of the minds of men, and flourish more
 ‘ in their lives by it.’

These great and good effects mentioned by Mr. *Benson*
 and Mr. *Mole*, seem also to be most earnestly desired by
 Dr. *Doddridge* in these words, ¹ ‘ I would hope, the at-
 ‘ tacks made on common Christianity, are in some mea-
 ‘ sure leading us to this: and I earnestly pray, that infi-
 ‘ nite wisdom may over-rule that evil, to the production
 ‘ of so great a good.’ For as he elsewhere adds, ² ‘ It is
 ‘ thus that meat often comes out of the eater, and sweet-
 ‘ ness out of the fierce; and the subtle are taken in their
 ‘ own craftiness. The grossness of such visible and pal-
 ‘ pable snares engages prudent people to avoid the path in
 ‘ which they lie, and so secures them from others of a
 ‘ finer contexture, and a more dangerous form.’

With these views therefore, and for this end only,
 agreeable to Mr. *Barker*’s advice in his introductory Ser-
 mon to the Lectures preached against Popery at *Salters-*
Hall, I have taken upon me to publish these remarks; and
 if they may in the least contribute to so necessary, and
desirable a reformation, I shall greatly rejoice, little re-
 garding

⁹ *Grounds*, &c. p. 75, 76. ¹ Third Letter, p. 44. ² First
 etter, p. 32.

garding what angry persons bigotted to human forms and corrupt traditions may say, or think of them.

Had the practice of our Pædobaptist brethren been ridiculed after the manner of this objection by one of the Baptist persuasion, they might perhaps have been greatly displeased, and returned very different answers to us. But coming from an Infidel, it appears so just, and of so much weight, that our brethren seem greatly alarmed by it : and in order to defend Christianity, they have, in effect, given up infant-baptism, as an human appointment only, and as such entirely indefensible by scripture and antiquity. Hereby they have manifested a true love and regard for the religion of Jesus, above their own forms and traditions, so long joined with it, and practised as a part of it. A good step this towards that reformation, which hath been so long wanted, as the most certain way to prevent such objections, and the most likely means of uniting all Christians ; but is now become absolutely necessary for their own vindication, to secure themselves from the charge of inconsistency, or being self-condemned in carrying on a solemn farce, doing that *in the name of the Lord, which they own, the Lord hath not commanded them ; an acknowledged absurdity no where expressly revealed in the New Testament, which is also said to be so much a stranger to any such sentiments or practices, that the rational believers of Christianity have nothing further to do with, but to disown and disavow them.* And this appears so clearly in their several answers to this objection, that I shall give them my readers at large, adding thereto some few remarks. And as our famous Universities claim precedence, I will begin first with theirs.

S E C T. I.

Remarks on the Cambridge Letter,

THE *Cambridge* young gentleman introduces his answer to the objection above, with the following remarkable paragraph. And if what is therein contained, had been strictly attended to by all, who have assumed the christian name, I am persuaded there would have been no room for answering such objections.

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‘ Writers

‘ Writers of your rank, *says he,* ³ should have stronger apprehensions of mischief, from the folly and fury which naturally attend ignorance, bigotry, and presumed inspiration, than from the spirit and temper of the rationalist. To preserve a sense of religion among mankind, is surely, in some degree, necessary to the peace and welfare of society. And if we believe the supreme Being hath interposed in this affair, it becometh us to suppose, he hath done it in a WISE AND WORTHY MANNER. In all the constructions we make of his declared will and pleasure, with regard to our faith and practice, NOTHING EVIDENTLY DISHONOURABLE IS TO BE ALLOWED. Reflections of this kind have engaged good and wise men to ascribe righteousness to their maker, and to endeavour to bring a good report on PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION.

‘ You ask, p. 9. “ Can a man be baptized into a rational religion.” ‘ By commenting on the form of baptism in our church, you endeavour to establish the negative ; which you conclude with : yet such is the pleasure and ordinance of God himself in this point.’ But such pleasure and ordinance of God respecting infant-baptism, is fully and clearly disowned by our young Gentleman, in these words. ‘ All this is said, as if the whole of your account was expressly revealed in the New Testament.’ And then he proceeds giving up their church establishments, and 39 articles also, as favouring too much of human *appointments*, and thereby deviating from original Christianity, when he adds, ‘ The forms and modes of worship, the manner of administering the sacraments, and definitions and decrees relating to doctrines, as far as they are human appointments, do not belong to our consideration.’ What ! not to the consideration of those who own and practise them in bar of the pure truths and appointments of Christ ? I should rather have thought, that they were under the highest obligation to consider them.

In the next page he affirms, ‘ God hath only required what is short, plain, and evidently connected with our duty.’ And here he says, ‘ with original Christianity only is our present concern.’ Thus he hath wisely evaded the objection, because perhaps he might find that the principles, and practice of his church in this particular

lar are indefensible; and for the same reason, acknowledging the insuperable difficulties thereby brought upon our holy religion, he prudently avoids giving any answer to another objection, by saying, p. 9, 10. ‘ We have already observed, that all our present concern is with pure and simple Christianity; and not to account for difficulties added by religious establishments. You are not therefore to expect any remarks on the article concerning good works done before faith, &c. But to your question, says our Gentleman, p. 5. was there ever in the world a religion which deserved the name of rational? Have there not been, in many religions, several things very fitting and reasonable, tho’ attended with many and shocking absurdities? Hath not the Christian religion as fair and just a pretence as any other to be deemed rational?’ It is no pretence to say the Christian religion is rational. It is really so in itself, and ought not to be compared with others; for tho’ under the church of *England*, and some other establishments, it may be attended, if I may not be allowed to say, *with many and shocking absurdities*, I think, I may with many things indefensible, inconsistent with reason, and primitive Christianity. Yet, by his own confession, this cannot be true of *pure and simple Christianity*, which itself hath no *difficulties to account for*, and such things being only added thereto by *human appointments*, we have, according to Mr. Mole, *nothing further to do, but to disown and disavow them; as we very well may*, what our young Gentleman adds, as follows: ‘ Where is the absurdity of the relations and friends of infants dedicating them to the service of God, and engaging to bring them up in the fear and reverence of their maker, and in all the virtues and duties which become us as social beings?’

For is it not this very practice of sprinkling infants *in the name of the Lord*, on which this Infidel’s objection is founded? And are not these words of his justly applicable to them?

‘ It is impossible, surely, when we consider to whom we must ascribe them, that any such absurd schemes can any longer be supposed, that we can ever imagine, that the great author and finisher of our faith should have contrived us an irrational one, to be afterwards superseded, or even confirmed by a rational one.’ Which is the well-known appointment, and practice of our esta-

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blished

* *Christianity not founded on Argument*, p. 10, 11.

blished church. Their infants commence Christians and church-members, when they have not the exercise of understanding, and are entirely ignorant of what is done; and this unwarrantable act of their sponsors is afterwards supposed to be superseded, and confirmed by the infants themselves, when they come to years of understanding. For when they come to be confirmed by the bishops, then the sponsors are supposed to be discharged from all the obligations, which they, I can hardly say, solemnly entered into. But at the very time, when they laid themselves under those engagements, if they had at all considered, they must have been assured, that it was impossible to make them good; and that such promises, in strictness of speech, never were fulfilled by any one infant, for whom they were made, if it lived to years of maturity.

But as our young Gentleman expresses himself, ^s ‘ Is it
 ‘ indeed doing honour to God, to suppose we become ac-
 ‘ ceptable to him, by renouncing our most distinguishing
 ‘ excellency in the most exalted and excellent affair of re-
 ‘ ligion? Is this the peculiar glory of the gospel revela-
 ‘ tion, that it teacheth us to cultivate warm affections and
 ‘ blind zeal; to have a steady and strong faith, but not to
 ‘ presume to inquire why or what we believe? [*or pro-
 ‘ mise.*] By children, ideots, and ignorant pagans, when
 ‘ they can once pronounce the words, creeds may be re-
 ‘ peated. Now, tho’ they cannot connect sense with
 ‘ their words, do they commence believers, by having
 ‘ an unaccountable liking and affection for these sounds?’
 But thus accomplished, persons receive Confirmation, and
 then are accounted rational Christians, and thereby inti-
 tled to the holy communion, tho’ they may afterwards
 live in all manner of wickedness; for under some certain
 circumstances, what pious minister durst refuse it them;
 but they are not permitted to approach the Lord’s table
 before confirmation, notwithstanding their baptism, and
 the vows of their sureties for them. First, *That they should
 renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity
 of this world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh.* Secondly,
*That they should believe all the articles of the christian
 faith.* And Thirdly, *That they should keep God’s holy will and
 commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their
 lives.* In the ministration of the public baptism of in-
 fants, the minister addresses the sureties thus;

‘ Dost

‘ Dost thou in the name of this child renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all the covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that thou wilt not follow, nor be led by them ?

Answer. ‘ I renounce them all.

Minister. ‘ Dost thou believe in God the Father almighty, maker, &c.

Answer. ‘ All this I stedfastly believe.

Minister. ‘ Wilt thou be baptized in this faith ?

Answer. ‘ That is my desire.

Minister. ‘ Wilt thou then obediently keep God’s holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of thy life ?

Answer. ‘ I will.

‘ Propositions, says our Gentleman, ⁶ of an indifferent nature, and in which the welfare of mankind, neither here nor hereafter, is in any degree concerned, we are not bound to apprehend and believe. But when the case is quite different, attention and application are proper and necessary. [*For*] the truth of the gospel [*Institutions*] is a very material point in question.’ But with how little seriousness, piety and devotion, and with what gross ignorance, this established order of the church of *England*, for making infants Christians and church-members, is frequently accompanied, Dr. *Wall* freely acknowledges in these very words, where he also prefers adult-baptism before it.

⁷ ‘ The solemnity of the circumstances in the administration of baptism, (as also of the other sacrament) does very powerfully strike and affect the mind of any devout Christian that sees it administered. The baptism of an infant cannot have all the solemnity which that of an adult person may have. The previous fasting and prayer, the penitent confession, the zeal and humility, and deep affection of the receiver may be visible there ; which cannot be in the case of an infant. But for that very reason we ought not to deprive the administration of this sacrament to infants of any solemnity of which it is capable.

‘ The immersion of the person (whether infant or adult) in the posture of one that is buried and raised up
‘ again,

‘ again, is much more solemn, and expresses the design
 ‘ of the sacrament, and the mystery of the spiritual wash-
 ‘ ing much better, than pouring a small quantity of wa-
 ‘ ter on the face. And that pouring of water is
 ‘ much better than sprinkling, or dropping a drop
 ‘ of water on it. If it be done in the church in, or at
 ‘ the font, and the congregation do join in the prayers
 ‘ there used; it is much more solemn than in a bed-cham-
 ‘ ber, out of a basin, or pipkin, a tea-cup, or a punch-
 ‘ bowl, and a bed-chamber is perhaps not quite so scandal-
 ‘ ous as a kitchen or stable; to which things look as if they
 ‘ would bring it at last.

‘ These he calls innovations and alterations for the
 ‘ worse, the vilipendiums of the holy sacrament shewn
 ‘ and used in the baptizing of infants.’

And after he has enumerated many of the ill conse-
 quences and abuses that attend it, and which he calls *ab-*
surd and ridiculous, he adds; ‘ The profanation and in-
 ‘ dignity in general on this sacrament, on occasion of
 ‘ this house-baptism, is so notorious, that I do appeal to
 ‘ the experience and conscience of all that use it, if they
 ‘ themselves be not scandalized at the indecent circum-
 ‘ stances that do almost always attend it. All the regard
 ‘ is commonly given to the preparations for eating and
 ‘ drinking; very little to the sacrament. Very few
 ‘ of the company join in the prayers; but only in the
 ‘ feasting and carnal jollity, which is too often carried on
 ‘ to such excess, as is more likely to bring a curse than
 ‘ a blessing upon the whole undertaking. This is com-
 ‘ monly yet worse when it is in an ale-house, or other lewd
 ‘ house. Those, who in such cases are chosen for godfa-
 ‘ thers and godmothers, are generally persons ignorant of
 ‘ the terms of the baptismal covenant themselves; and
 ‘ when they should make answer in the name of the
 ‘ child to the holy interrogatories, they neither mind the
 ‘ substance of the thing asked, nor do know what answer is
 ‘ fit to make; but do only in a ridiculous manner give a
 ‘ bow, a curtesy, or a nod; and that often not without
 ‘ apparent signs of mockery; and they frequently shew a
 ‘ very vain, irreverent, and wanton behaviour before,
 ‘ and in, and after the sacred administration. Is not this
 ‘ enough to turn the stomach of any serious Christian
 ‘ that is present? And if they reflect with themselves,
 ‘ and think; *Is this the way that I was baptized in?* to
 ‘ occasion perhaps their falling into the error we are speak-
 ‘ ing of, and resolving to be baptized again? Can a mi-
 ‘ nister

' nister of Christ take any comfort, or can he think that
 ' the dignity of the holy office which he is performing,
 ' is preserved in such management. In all parishes where
 ' baptism at the church is generally left off, the people are
 ' so ignorant of what is to be done and said at the bap-
 ' tism, (. . .) that if a child be brought to church to be
 ' baptized, neither are the congregation sensible of their
 ' duty of joining in the prayers, nor do the godfathers
 ' know what answer they are to make ; but there are holy
 ' questions publicly put without any one to answer :
 ' which, however it passes in a bed-chamber, is a great
 ' scandal and absurdity when a sacrament is administering
 ' in a christian congregation.'

More of this kind may be seen in the pages before referred
 to. But enough has been transcribed to shew what evils
 naturally result from a church's laying aside the purity of
 Christ's institution, and substituting instead thereof such
 traditions and inventions of men, *Mark* vii. 7, 8. as are
 neither worthy of the christian name, nor profitable to
 the souls of mankind. For when men once depart from
 the scripture rule, their seems to be no end of their dege-
 neracy ; one innovation making way for another to suc-
 ceed, till in the issue, they get into such superstitious and
 irreligious extremes in the use of them, as *are enough to*
turn the stomach of any serious Christian ; while the mini-
sters themselves are scandalized by the practice, even in the
 opinion of Dr. *Wall* himself. No wonder therefore that
 irreligion abounds, for such things must of course cherish
 a spirit of infidelity ; and make men think, that if they
 are scripture ordinances, there can be nothing in Christi-
 anity, which is in the least worthy of their regard. And
 hence we may also plainly learn the absolute necessity of
 a reformation, in order to maintain and perpetuate the
 christian religion to rising posterity, with that veneration
 and esteem, it justly deserves, which cannot be done,
 without returning back to the primitive practice of this
 divine ordinance, in exact conformity to the scripture
 rule. For besides them any profanations accompanying in-
 fant-baptism, as above recited, it may perhaps, when most
 decently administred, be nothing better than prostituting,
 or profaning a solemn institution, by applying it, contrary
 to the design of our Lord Jesus, to such unfit subjects, as
 are no ways capable, nor in the least worthy of it, for
 want of those moral qualifications, which are by him
 made necessary to the beneficial administration of this
 ordinance

ordinance to all his true disciples and followers. And as that, which I have transcribed above from the catechism and rubric of the church of *England*, is no where *expressly revealed in the New Testament*, which is the only justifiable authority, by which a protestant church of Christ can consistently support their religious rites: so to do those things, as acts of religion, *in the name of the Lord*, is expressly forbidden in scripture, and with a severe penalty too, *because the Lord hath not commanded it*, Deut. xviii. 15—20.

And moreover, to use the words of our Gentleman,
 8 ‘ This is further illustrated by the instance of musick,
 ‘ and the case of him who wants both taste and an ear.
 ‘ Needless are all these arguings; for impossibilities are not
 ‘ expected from us, either by God or by any reasonable
 ‘ man; and perfect incapacity affordeth a perfect excuse.’
 And the *Oxford Reply* with the greatest truth affirms; 9 ‘ *That infants have no reason, nor are they therefore capable of religion*; and yet they proceed in their name, and as their act, by sponsors whom they never did, nor were ever able to substitute, to ask an infant void of understanding, *Dost thou renounce, &c? dost thou believe, &c? and wilt thou be baptized, &c?* and then, notwithstanding it is utterly incapable of speech, to make it answer by such proxies, *I renounce them all. All this I stedfastly believe, and that is my desire.* After which, tho’ the child be quite destitute of every prerequisite essential to the ordinance of baptism, as it is plainly declared in their catechism, yet the minister with much absurdity and little truth says, *I baptize thee*, when instead thereof, he only sprinkles a few drops, or just wipes his wet hand upon the face. Is not all this monstrously absurd, as well as false? And what signifies their disowning, and giving up such corruptions in words only, as unscriptural and unchristian, while in fact they continue to practise them, as an essential part of their religion, tho’ not of the christian religion? Is this consistent, or are such answers the way to satisfy infidels, to silence their objections, and bring them into communion with their church?’

And whereas our *Cambridge Gentleman* says, 1 ‘ Happy would it be for man, in his present and future state,
 ‘ were these promises duly regarded by those whose business
 ‘ it is to instruct, and did good instructions make a last-
 ‘ ing

8 Page 11. 9 *Oxford Reply*, p. 8. 1 *Cambridge Letter*, page 5.

‘ ing and proper impression when they are given ;’ would not these good effects be much more likely to attend the due administration of this ordinance to the proper subjects of it, who well understand what they promise, and personally engage to fulfil the same? This is all the answer, which seems to be particularly designed by the *Cambridge* young Gentleman, to this objection. For in the next paragraph he falls off, and asserts, that, ‘ The material and most important particulars of religion, are truths allowed and acknowledged by all, Atheists excepted.’ If amongst Christians, till the present age, this be true of baptism, which according to scripture is such an *important duty* of our religion, that the pardon of sin is by promise annexed to it; we are very sure it is not true of infant-sprinkling, which is indeed ‘ a distinguishing point [*with some*] parties, more eagerly and industriously inculcated than the weightier matters of the law. By a zeal for [*this*] have not men in [*many*] ages and places of the world attained to high fame and reputation,’ [*with some deluded and inconsiderate admirers of it, who have not made that*] ‘ proper distinction and separation,’ [*between truth and error, between divine and human appointments, as might justly*] ‘ be expected ;’ [*notwithstanding that priestly reproach, in part borrowed from this infidel writer, and cast by him upon his fellow mortals, whom he calls*] ‘ the bulk of mankind ;’ [*Whose*] ‘ heads are only turned to the confused sound of words,’ as if the powers and faculties of mind in most men were not so good as his own ; nor capable of distinguishing themselves so eminently under the like culture and advantage of education. But from his own confession afterwards it does not appear, that our abilities, our integrity, or our attainments are much, if at all, inferior to many of his learned brethren, of whom he says,

² ‘ Even in the learned world, I mean, those who have had a learned education, how inconsiderable is the number who are either able, or willing, or dare to think? Now since such as these are almost wholly passive, having no desires, no designs, to fetch in materials for thinking, what happeneth to this idle, and indolent herd, is of small importance. They never can be possessed of real knowledge. Insignificant sounds are their only accomplishments. As for those who consider and shew themselves men, who accustom themselves to reflections and reviews, and who are under no terrors, either from tem-

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‘ poral

' poral or spiritual powers, with them prepossession is not a
 ' very important point.' And he appears to have much
 juster notions of God, and his dealings with such *confused*
heads, as we laymen are represented to be, by adding,
 ' And when this is owing to the want of capacity and op-
 ' portunity, they are excusable before the great ruler of
 ' the universe, who only expects returns according to the
 ' talents we have received. As for those who by their
 ' state and condition are in full possession of the means of
 ' information,' meaning, I suppose, himself and his bre-
 thren of the Universities, with the rest of the learned
 world ; ' on them it is incumbent to review the sugges-
 ' tions of education, and to practise care and impartiality
 ' in the important affair of religion.' And it is the more
 necessary for them to do so, that this complaint of God
 by the prophet may no longer be applicable to them. *The*
leaders of this people cause them to err, Isa. ix. 16." For, if
 by their Canons and Church authority, any errors have
 been propagated, any human appointments established,
 instead of those which Christ instituted, as set forth in the
 holy scriptures ; and they are now convinced, that our
 holy religion cannot be defended against the attacks of an
 infidel, without giving up such *human establishments*, as *no*
where expressly revealed in the New Testament : they are
 bound in conscience, as they will answer it in the great day
 of account, to repeal such canons ; and make use of their
 power and authority, not by penal laws to establish, but
 by christian methods to promote the truth, and the prac-
 tice of every christian ordinance, according to the rule of
 scripture, in order to perfect that reformation, which was
 in part begun many years ago. Nor can there be the least
 reason for our established church to be afraid of setting
 about so good and necessary a work, because it would on-
 ly be acting entirely consistent with her own articles ; in
 which every one of her ministers has, in a very solemn
 manner, declared his stedfast and firm belief. And may she
 not very justly expect, that all her other members likewise
 will peaceably and quietly acquiesce in such a reformation,
 for as much as her xxth and xxxivth articles say expressly,
 that ' The church hath power to decree rites or ceremo-
 ' nies, and authority in controversies of faith : and yet it
 ' is not lawful for the church to ordain any thing that is
 ' contrary to God's word written, neither may it so ex-
 ' pound one place of scripture, that it be repugnant to
 ' another. Wherefore, although the church be a witness
 ' and

‘ and a keeper of the holy writ, yet as it ought not to decree any thing against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of salvation.

‘ It is not necessary that traditions and ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly alike; for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times and men’s manners, so that nothing be ordained against God’s word.
 ‘ Every particular or national church hath authority to ordain, change, and abolish ceremonies or rites of the church, ordained only by man’s authority, so that all things be done to edifying.’

And we have reason to hope for this reformation, not only from the frequent and open concessions they make us; but also because this learned member of one of our Universities in behalf of himself and others assures us, that ‘ The practical points of Christianity being plain and evident, as to these there can be no alteration, when we are resolved to be and to do good.’ This character I therefore hope they will justly deserve, and pray God it may be fully manifested in him, and in all the other members of our two famous Universities, till pure and simple Christianity, free from all human mixtures, is strictly adhered to, and universally practised in their church. And we have also the like encouragement to hope for this from the *Oxford Reply* to the same objection: which I will next consider.

S E C T. II.

Remarks on the Oxford Reply.

THE *Oxford* young Gentleman in the beginning of his letter assures us, ‘ His opinion is, that a religion intended for men must be a reasonable religion. That we are not to take things always upon trust; but, so far as our abilities and opportunities will carry us, to examine and judge for ourselves; and to this end, (which, *says he*, of all others I look upon to be the most weighty and important) I told you my resolution was to bend all my academical studies.’ And for this he has

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given

³ *Cambridge Letter*, p. 12.

given a very just and weighty reason, ⁴ where he says, ‘ It must be granted, that the prejudices of education have great force upon our minds in favour of the opinions we have imbibed in our younger years.’

If *to examine and judge for ourselves* in the great affair of religion be *of all others the most weighty and important, so that we are not therein to take things upon trust*; surely it must highly become our Oxonian Gentleman, and every other Pædobaptist, most seriously to weigh and consider, whether another person’s doing any thing to them, as an act of religion, without their knowledge and consent, and without any command from God, can be at all acceptable to him; or is sufficient to exempt them afterwards from a personal and voluntary submission and obedience to the institution of Christ, when they come to years of understanding, and are capable of the qualifications, which the scriptures direct to, and accordingly in the judgment of our established church, are therein required of persons to be baptized. This leads me to consider his answer to the objection against a rational faith, arising from the practice of infant-baptism, which begins thus:

⁵ ‘ You ask, p. 9. Can a man be baptized into a rational religion? Which question, in the terms in which it is conceived, is a very extraordinary one. Can a man be baptized, &c? Why not, Sir? Will you give me leave to ask in my turn: Can a man believe a rational religion, and make profession of it? I hope he may. And what does being baptized imply more than this?’

If being baptized imply *the believing and making profession of a rational religion*, or in the terms of their church catechism, ‘*Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and faith, whereby they stedfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that sacrament*’; then infants cannot possibly be the subjects of it, and this he has most frankly and honestly acknowledged in these words. ⁶ ‘ But by what follows I guess you would have said, Can that be a reasonable religion, into which infants are baptized? For you presently ask again, Where is reason concerned when babes accept the terms of salvation by deputy? To which he thus replies, ‘ The reason of the infants themselves is no ways concerned in it. They have no reason, nor are they therefore capable of religion.’ Is it not therefore a very great reproach upon their church, to enact

⁴ Page 18.

⁵ *Oxford Reply*, p. 7.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 8.

enact such things for them, and in the same book publicly declare to all the world: *That baptism is only the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace in the person baptized, signifying his death unto sin, and new birth unto righteousness*; and that infants, by reason of their tender age, are unable to perform the necessary requisites for their admission to it? Would it not be much wiser and better for our established church to wait, till they are capable of religion; till the inward and spiritual grace, and all the necessary qualifications for that sacred ordinance appear in them; till they can *confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in their heart that God hath raised him from the dead*? Rom. x. 8—15. But to establish a method of procedure diametrically opposite to all this, and at the same time acknowledge it to be so, as, I think, their words sufficiently declare, are indeed such shocking contradictions, and such a glaring reproach to their church, that our Oxonian, in contending with an Infidel, could not pretend to vindicate, and only seems willing to palliate, by adding in very modest and cautious terms. ‘But they [*that is infants,*] may, so far as I can judge at present, by the mercies of God be capable of being admitted to the benefits of his covenant.’ That is, I well hope, to salvation by the mercies of God; for as he asserts elsewhere, ⁷ ‘Before the use of reason, it [*faith*] is not necessary at all; *i. e.* (. . .) necessary to save us from the penalties of the law; nor is it necessary, in this sense, at any time afterwards, but according to circumstances.’ Agreeable to which he says, ⁸ ‘Faith is necessary to all who may be convinced by the evidence offered; but I do not know that it is necessary to those, who having done their utmost cannot free themselves from scruples; necessary, I say, to save them from the penalties which the gospel threatens to unbelievers.’ And I wish, that Pædobaptists in our controversy would but carefully regard the same advice and caution, which this Oxonian here directs his author to, *namely* ‘Say honestly what the gospel is, and [*Infidels may*] do [*their*] worst. But it is not fair to load it with absurdities of [*their*] own inventions.’ Such things only make them inconsistent, and give Infidels advantage; and therefore, if in the passage I was upon, our young Gentleman means any thing concerning baptism, as I fear he does, tho’ the scriptures are entirely silent about
any

any covenant for their admission to it, it is given up again in the very next words directed to his author. ‘ You, perhaps, may be of another opinion;’ [*namely that infants cannot be saved without baptism, as too many weak Christians have pretended.*] ‘ But what has this question to do with the truth of religion?’ [*What indeed, as infants are incapable of religion, and the New Testament says nothing of their being baptized?*] ‘ But’ he goes on plainly denying what the Deist alledged, as I before observed the Cambridge letter had done, ‘ You lay it down peremptorily, that it is the pleasure and ordinance of God that infants should be baptized; because, I suppose, it best suited your purpose. For you know very well, that all Christians are not of a mind in this matter; and it shews you are hard put to it for arguments against Christianity, to lay hold of a disputed practice, and build upon it as a plain, express law of Christ.’ After this follows a more free and ingenuous confession, than is often met with from any Pædobaptists, but those of our established church. ‘ I do not remember any passage in the New Testament, which says expressly, that infants should be baptized; and as I am informed by better judges, the evidences for this practice from antiquity, tho’ very early, do not fully come up to the times of the apostles.’

Here is scripture and the best antiquity given up at once by this learned member of our University, as containing nothing in them *expressly* for the practice of *infant-baptism*; and from this conviction therefore, he very modestly and very wisely subjoins: ‘ So that if I did believe the receiving children into covenant by baptism to be so absurd a thing as you seem to think it; I should judge it to be more reasonable to question the agreeableness of this practice, (how general soever,) to the institution of Christ, than to reject the gospel on that account.’

This being the whole of our *Oxford* young Gentleman’s Reply to this objection, I shall only ask him further, how far the continuing a practice, the agreeableness of which to the institution of Christ, he questions, can be justified by *St. Paul’s* rule of conduct, *Rom. xiv. 22—23.* as himself explains it, p. 31, 32: where, as his brother at *Cambridge* had done, he also gives up the validity of their church articles, with her *definitions and determinations in matters of religion?* The whole passage runs thus. ‘ But how do you prove, that natural religion will stand a man in
‘ no

' no stead? Why, by appealing to an article of the
 ' church of *England*, which says, that works done before
 ' the grace of Christ, are not pleasant to God, nor do
 ' they make men meet to receive grace.' [*Of what use*
 ' *can infant-baptism be then?*] ' I am not divine enough,
 ' Sir, to settle the precise meaning of this article. It
 ' may possibly be this, that our best and most perfect natu-
 ' ral state is so defective, that we cannot plead acceptance
 ' with God, without his free, undeserved mercy in the
 ' pardon of our sins; which I think is true. But sup-
 ' posing the doctrine of the article to be as you would re-
 ' present it, what would be the consequence? Are you
 ' of those who think it reasonable to set down the deci-
 ' sions of a particular church as the standard of the chris-
 ' tian doctrine? For decency you do indeed quote a text
 ' of scripture; *Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin*. But you
 ' cannot, I apprehend, lay any real stress upon this,
 ' which even I (unskilled in the scriptures as I am) can see
 ' is nothing to the purpose. The Apostle was speaking
 ' of eating certain meats, concerning which the ques-
 ' tion was, whether they might lawfully be eaten or not.
 ' In these cases he directs, that every man should take care
 ' to satisfy his own judgment, and not do any thing un-
 ' persuaded of the lawfulness of it. *I know and am per-*
 ' *suaded that nothing is unclean of itself; but to him*
 ' *that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is un-*
 ' *clean: Rom. xiv. 14.* To eat, whilst I doubt whether
 ' I may lawfully eat or not, is not of faith, and *Whatso-*
 ' *ever is not of faith, is sin, ver. 23.* What tendency
 ' has this to shew that God will damn men for their
 ' most innocent mistakes; or that the best faith they
 ' can get, the best life they can lead, will be of no
 ' account, if in all points a man believes not aright?
 ' If you know of any other text that says this,
 ' produce it, and it shall be admitted. But to say
 ' that the church of *England* teaches this is saying
 ' nothing. For if it were true that this is the sense of
 ' the article (which I verily believe it is not) I would an-
 ' swer as I have already answered in another case: IT IS
 ' MORE REASONABLE TO GIVE UP THE ARTI-
 ' CLE THAN THE GOSPEL.'

The just sentiments, which these young members of
 our Universities have told us, they entertain concerning
 church authority, and decisions in matters of religion,
 are much fuller expressed by Mr. *Mole*, so as to ex-

tend to all Pædobaptist churches, in his answer to the same argument from the article of the church of *England*, in these words. ⁹ ‘Our author indeed has an expression of his church, which may be of some service with those, who will be concluded by such kind of authority: but what matters it how his church, or any other such church, has expressed this, or any other matter whatever? Could the decisions of ever so many churches, and ever so well constituted, be produced to the contrary; what is there, that the nature of any such human assurances can possibly afford us, that has not more than a ballance in such an authority as that of God? The authority our author quotes is of a piece with his assertion, falshood and absurdity are upheld by such authority; but the doctrine of Christ, as it is of a different nature, stands upon a very different ground.’

But the author of Christianity not founded on Argument hath dropped a suggestion, of which neither the *Cambridge Letter*, nor the *Oxford Reply*, had reason to take any notice, because to be sure they believe it is true. Yet Mr. *Mole* hath taken occasion from thence to cast some reflections upon our established church, tho’, in my apprehension, it does not appear with a very good grace, unless there was more difference between hers, and the Presbyterian establishment, respecting the commencement of Christianity and church membership in the infants of each, by bringing them to what they both falsely call baptism, tho’ they are equally unqualified for it.

S E C T. III.

Remarks on the office of baptism in the kirk of Scotland, and the English directory by the assembly of divines.

THAT the infants, which commence Christians and church-members in the kirk of *Scotland*, are equally unqualified with those in our established church, the practice there as unscriptural, and founded as intirely upon human authority, is manifest. The kirk of *Scotland* indeed

⁹ *Grounds of the Christian Faith rational*, p. 80.

deed hath restrained the grace of baptism to the infants of believers; and the *English* directory says; 'That *such children by baptism are solemnly received into the bosom of the visible church, That they are Christians, and federally holy before baptism, and therefore are they baptized.* Innocent infants they are; but holy Christians is an epithet, which no such infants deserve. But tho' they do esteem them so, yet the kirk requires the parent and one godfather to engage for the child; for the order of baptism used by them is as follows,

'The infant which is to be baptized, shall be brought to church on the day appointed, to common prayer and preaching, accompanied with the father and godfather. So that after the sermon, the child being presented to the minister, he demandeth this question.'

'Do you present this child to be baptized, earnestly desiring that he may be ingrafted in the mystical body of Jesus Christ? The answer is, Yea, we require the same.' Then follows a long discourse, in which the minister says, 'Our infants appertain to him [*God*] by covenant, and therefore ought not to be defrauded of those holy signs and badges, whereby his children are known from infidels and pagans.' Here I beg leave to ask what special marks this distinguishing badge leaves upon a newborn infant, by which it may be known from an *Infidel's* child that never was sprinkled? I am apt to think the wisest minister would be wholly at a loss to tell the one from the other in two minutes time, if both were of an age, and dressed alike. Nor would he be able to tell, whether any other child was ever sprinkled or not, if he was to view it ever so long, and with the utmost care and attention. But when men are so zealously determined to establish their own human traditions upon the ruin of Christ's solemn institution, they have not a due regard to his truth, or they durst never have asserted what follows:

'Neither is it requisite, that all those that receive this sacrament, have the use of understanding and faith.' If they meant here the sprinkling, or washing the infant's face, as their own human institution only, I should agree with them; but if they mean, that those things are not needful, or requisite to baptism, as instituted by Christ, a greater reproach cannot be cast upon it; nor any thing said more contrary to truth. For does not the commission say, *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.* Mark xvi. 16. Did not *Philip* insist upon the eunuch's believing

with all his heart, as a necessary requisite for his being baptized? *Acts* viii. Do the scriptures any where speak of one soul baptized, who was destitute of understanding and faith? Or, do they give the least hint, that such may be received to that sacred ordinance? If not, how durst they assert such things? Is it not directly contrary to the scripture, which assures us, that *without faith it is impossible to please God*; for *he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*. Heb. xi. 6. See also vi. 1, 2. And moreover St. *Peter* assures us, that even where the external part of baptism is rightly administered, it will avail nothing, if it be not accompanied with the answer of a good conscience in the person baptized, 1 *Peter* iii. 21.

Our established church knew the truth of this much better, than the kirk of *Scotland* appears to have done; and was so fully convinced hereof, that she has honestly, and faithfully told us, that *repentance, whereby sin is forsaken; and faith, whereby the promises of God made over in that sacrament are stedfastly believed, are required of persons to be baptized*. And for this reason it was to be sure, that she hath obliged the sponsors to do it for infants, chusing rather to load herself with a gross absurdity, than to deny so plain a truth, as the kirk of *Scotland* has done: which must therefore, in the sight of God, be guilty of a much greater evil in performing her human ceremonies; at which her ministers proceed and tell the people, that ‘ Without injury they [*infants*] cannot be debarred from the common sign of God’s children. And yet is not this outward action of such necessity, that the lack thereof should be hurtful to their salvation, if that, prevented by death, they may not conveniently be presented to the church.’ And the directory drawn up by the assembly of divines, and established by an ordinance of parliament, *Jan.* 3, 1644, says, ‘ That outward baptism is not so necessary, that thro’ the want thereof the infant is in danger of damnation, or the parents guilty, if they do not condemn or neglect the ordinance of Christ, when and where it may be had:’ which however strongly implies that where this is so neglected, that the children die without it, it may be hurtful to their salvation, and put them in danger of damnation, notwithstanding their being holy Christians. And this indeed hath very often been asserted by some ministers, as if an innocent babe could be damned for the parents neglect. Such are the absurd, unworthy

thy notions which they entertain of God the most righteous, most wise, and best of beings.

After this the minister proceeds and tells them, ‘ All that is meant and signified by [*baptism*] the scripture calleth our regeneration, which standeth chiefly in these two points, in mortification, that is to say, a resisting of the rebellious lusts of the flesh, and in newness of life, whereby we continually strive to walk in that pureness and perfection, wherewith we are clad in baptism.’ But the assembly’s directory says, ‘ That infants are Christians, and federally holy before baptism, and therefore are they baptized.’ The contrariety of these things is manifest enough. For if *infants are holy Christians before baptism*, what is the *pureness and perfection, wherewith they are clad in baptism*; or of what benefit can it be to them, since by the kirk’s own confession, if the parents are not negligent, the child may be saved without this imaginary *pureness and perfection*? But what proof can be given, that an infant receives the least benefit by their unscriptural ceremonies, either in body, or in mind? If an Infidel’s child, which was never sprinkled, and which by their own principles ought not to be baptized, was placed under the same education, is it not as likely to make as good a man, and as devout a Christian? And would it not be much more likely to yield a personal obedience, from a principle of conscience, to that holy ordinance, which our Lord requires, that every believer in him should observe, on condition of being esteemed *his friend and disciple*? John viii. 31. and xv. 10—15. In this view therefore, their infants are much more likely to be injured, than benefitted, by their superstitious practice, in *teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*, Mark vii. 7, 13. founded in wild enthusiasm, quite destitute of good sense, and all rational evidence. But it seems any jargon of words will pass with high esteem, and please some people, if the name of the church, or the assembly of divines be tacked to them.

But the minister proceeds saying, ‘ Finally, to the intent that we may be assured, that you the father and the surety consent to the performance hereof, declare here before God and the face of his congregation the sum of that faith, wherein you believe, and will instruct this child.’

‘ Then the father, or in his absence, the Godfather, shall rehearse the articles of his faith: [*the apostles creed*]

‘ which done the minister explaineth the same ;’ which explanation is too long, and unnecessary to be transcribed here, but after that is done, then followeth a short prayer, and after that, the Lord’s prayer ; and ‘ when they have prayed in this sort, the minister requireth the child’s name, which known, he saith,

‘ N. I baptize thee in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And as he speaketh these words, he taketh water in his hand, and layeth it upon the child’s forehead, which done, he giveth thanks :’ the form of which I need not transcribe.

And yet, notwithstanding, the human inventions here recited, it is, under the *head of sacraments*, affirmed by *publick authority* ; whereby this order of baptism was further commanded *there to be practised in the said kirk*, Anno 1641, that,

‘ To Christ Jesus his holy gospel truly preached, of necessity it is, that his holy sacraments be annexed, and truly ministered, as seals and visible confirmations of the spiritual promises contained in the word ; and they be two, to wit, baptism, and the holy supper of the Lord Jesus, which are then rightly ministered, . . . when farther to them is nothing added, from them nothing diminished, and in their practice nothing changed besides the institution of the Lord Jesus, and practice of his holy apostles.

‘ And albeit the order of *Geneva*, which now is used in some of our churches, is sufficient to instruct the diligent reader how that both these sacraments may be rightly ministered, yet for an uniformity to be kept, we have thought good to add this as superabundant.

‘ In baptism we acknowledge nothing to be used except the element of water only (that the word and declaration of the promises ought to precede we have said before) wherefore whosoever presumeth in baptism to use oyl, salt, wax, spittle, conjuration and crossing, [and I may also add, any other human inventions whatsoever, even sprinkling or washing of the face, or of godfathers, &c. above-mentioned] ‘ accuseth the perfect institution of Christ Jesus, of imperfection. For it was void of all such inventions devised by men, and such as would presume to alter Christ’s perfect ordinance, you ought severely to punish.’

With this severe censure, which may justly be applied to her own practice, she breaths the true spirit of persecution.

tion. And pursuant to an order of assembly, her ministers oblige the parent and surety solemnly to promise, that *if the child live, they will teach and instruct it, in both the assemblies catechisms*: by which an early bias is thrown upon the mind, in favour of false principles, and very corrupt doctrines, such as are even contrary to the first principles of natural religion, as well as to the sacred scriptures, in their just consequences very hurtful to men, and utterly inconsistent with the moral perfections of God. For they represent him, as the real and cruel author of all sin, ¹ as if he had by an eternal immutable decree unchangeably fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass; and without any foresight of faith, or the least regard to good works performed by men, or to their perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the
crea-

¹ N. B. The assembly's confession of faith, from whence they composed their catechism, on the article of God's decrees, says, ' God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: &c. . . . By the decree of God for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death.

' These angels and men thus predestinated, and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.'

If these articles are true, nothing can be more inconsistent, than for those zealous Christians, who profess stedfastly to believe them, to anathematize their brethren, who disbelieve many of them; and openly to declare, as they are too ready to do, that we *cannot possibly be saved*, that we *must necessarily be damned*: As a minister sometime ago was pleased to say of me, only because I differed from his sentiments about some points of faith. My reply was to this effect; that he did not understand his own principles, for if God decreed and fore-ordained every thing, or whatsoever comes to pass; he then decreed me to believe, as I do, and likewise fore-ordained me to own and profess that belief. And if the number of his elect were so particular, so certain and definite, that none of them could possibly fail of salvation, it was impossible for my belief, or disbelief of any article to alter God's decree; and therefore for any thing he could tell, even upon his own principles, I might be one of God's dear children, whilst here, notwithstanding my present belief, and may, by his grace, be for ever happy in the enjoyment of him hereafter.

creature, he had by a partial and unwise election, of his mere arbitrary will and pleasure, chosen some particular persons to eternal life and blessedness; and also, without the least mercy or compassion, had cruelly and unjustly, &c. reprobated all the rest of mankind to dishonour and wrath. These opinions naturally tend to remove from the minds of men almost every motive to the practice of virtue, and to expel from thence all restraints from the sensual gratification of their vicious lusts and passions; to prompt and encourage them without remorse or fear to the wilful commission of all ungodliness, and unrighteousness. For if these principles are true, no kind of wickedness can ever endanger the happiness of the elect; nor the strictest virtue prevent the divine wrath and vengeance from being poured out upon the reprobate, and consigning them all to the unspeakable remediless miseries of hell. And as presumption, or despair naturally results from those false, I might have said wicked, blasphemous, and soul destroying principles, so injurious to, and unbecoming the majesty of heaven, the tender, compassionate Parent of the whole universe, *who does good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works; who has sworn that, he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live;* and in the most compassionate manner intreats them to turn from sin, that they may escape death, and inherit life, *Ezek. xxxiii. 11*: so with respect to the false principles set forth by the assembly of divines, it is rather to be wondered at, that any persons, who believe them, should be truly religious, and kept from the daring sin of presumption, or of sinking into the depths of despair, than that everlasting ruin should thereby be brought upon many, who might otherwise have escaped the misery, which it is greatly to be feared hath been the unhappy consequence of them to many souls. And what Mr. Mole says² is very true, that, ‘ If . . . our education . . . has
‘ consisted in learning and blindly receiving the creeds,
‘ catechisms, or other compositions of fallible men, and
‘ being taught to take the doctrines thereof for the truths of
‘ Christianity, upon no arguments, but the authority of
‘ those, who compiled, or authorised, or acquainted us
‘ with those systems; such education consists in folly and
‘ falsehood, and to cultivate all the effects of such education, would be to confirm ourselves in the absurd de-
‘ lusions

² *Grounds*, &c. p. 58.

‘ lutions and mistakes, which others had led us into, and
 ‘ which God knows is the case of myriads.’

And moreover, the books of the last and some former ages, abounding so much with those unworthy notions of God, together with the zeal with which these and other doctrines of the like kind were then taught, and contended for, by Christians in general, may justly be looked upon as the fatal seeds of that infidelity, which hath now produced so general a defection from Christianity in this age. For if men once come to be persuaded, that principles so contrary to the nature and perfections of God, are really contained in the bible; how can it be supposed they should ever believe such a revelation to come from him, or that the christian religion should ever be divine? But in consequence of those false doctrines, and the supposed necessity of infant-sprinkling, many ministers, as well as other Christians, have been ready enough, with the author of *Christianity not founded on Argument*, to denounce damnation, declaring, that *such infants as die unbaptized, cannot be saved*, that there are *such in hell a span long*. Shocking opinion indeed! And tho’ Mr. *Mole*, and the rest of his brethren here in *England*, are generally come off from those corrupt principles; yet I question, whether any of them would care to sprinkle a child, which was not born of christian parents. But our established church is not so partial, for she generously opens her arms to all infants, and is willing to confer the grace of baptism, and receive them into her bosom, whether they be the children of believers, or of unbelievers; and hath taken care to provide them two other sureties, besides one godfather, and the parent, who is always supposed to be under the highest obligation to instruct them in the ways of piety, and train them up in the christian faith.

S E C T. IV.

Remarks on Mr. Mole's grounds of the christian faith rational.

THE suggestion referred to page 32. is thus introduced by Mr. *Mole*. ³ ‘But when it is added:’ “And to distinguish still further our established church in particular, as the mode the most conformable to that divine plan;” ‘this is what I would neither desire him to grant, nor grant him, if he should desire it,’ [*equally as soon, as I would to Mr. Mole, and the kirk of Scotland, and he has full as much reason to do it too*] ‘without his first proving, that this is part of the task, which is required of us by God. This is [*also*] to introduce a difficulty into the case far greater, than all that was in it before amounted to; and which, I shall readily concur with this author, in supposing, that our reason is altogether unequal to. The arguments, which abundantly evince the truth and authority of Christianity, are calculated to prove something else of our established church;’ [*and the kirk of Scotland too*] ‘but by no means the truth of [*their*] doctrines, or authority of [*their*] decisions, as such.’ And to what this same author has said, p. 10. ‘That we are to address ourselves to heaven to inculcate the full complement of our belief, will help us to a just and uniform account of its whole nature, whilst it points readily back to its source of baptism.’ Mr. *Mole* replies after this manner, ⁴ ‘Such a faith indeed, as derives merely from baptism, has that for its source, and nothing else, may possibly be in this manner supported; being of an irrational original, it may be cultivated in a method conformable exactly to that of its implanting: but for such source, and such support of faith, we must, I imagine, look somewhere else than in the scriptures.’ If Mr. *Mole* means in our established church, or the church of *Rome* either; we may as well look to *Scotland*, and find the same just cause for reflection upon the Presbyterian church there, and upon all the branches of it amongst his own party here

³ Ibid. p. 102. ⁴ Ibid. p. 65.

here in *England*, notwithstanding the *faith* which it is pretended infants *derive from their parents*, or that *Christianity and federal holiness* they imagine them to have *before*, intitling them to *baptism*: or that *pureness and perfection* with which they fancy infants *are clad*, when they confer, what is stiled the grace of *baptism*, upon them. For, as I before quoted from the same writer, ⁵ ‘It is impossible, surely, when we consider to whom we must ascribe them, that any such absurd schemes can any longer be supposed, that we can ever imagine, that the great author and finisher of our faith should have contrived us an irrational one, to be afterwards superseded, or even confirmed by a rational one.’

And as Mr. *Mole* very justly observes from the ⁶ same author, ‘If any should be so unhappy, as to be trained up in this method,’ “and upon notice from his sureties of the condition, they had engaged him in, should think of appealing, or making any further search for the certainty of that knowledge, in which he had been instructed, and positively refuse to stand to what they had done in his name, till they had laid the grounds and reasons of their proceedings before him to his satisfaction,” “or he had inquired into them for that purpose; he would be so far from deserving the odious character of a perverse apostate, that he must truly be looked upon, as in great measure a stranger to Christianity till he had done so: his so doing would be a necessary step to his becoming a real or rational Christian; and it is not those, who do this, but those who do not, who are in danger of deserving the character of aliens from the faith of Christ; tho’ not perhaps of receiving it from some certain quarters.’

I readily agree with this sentiment of Mr. *Mole*’s, and think the passage very applicable to the members of his own church, as well as to those of other Pædobaptists, to whom he has not only given the greatest encouragement for their reformation, by taking upon them a rational profession of Christianity with the baptized churches, upon the true scripture plan, free from all human mixtures: but hath also enforced the same with the strongest motives, to prevent any hesitation about forsaking those respective congregations, into which their parents had them baptized or sprinkled; and has furnished them with very cogent

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reasons,

⁵ *Christianity not founded*, &c. p. 10. ⁶ *Grounds*, &c. p. 70.

reasons, why they should absolutely renounce such education principles, such an human, unscriptural and unchristian method of gathering churches, or making Christians, as *a necessary step to their becoming real or rational Christians*. And hereby they will be so far from deserving the odious character of perverse apostates, that according to him they must truly be looked upon, as in great measure, strangers to Christianity, till they have done so, and are in danger of deserving the character of aliens from the faith of Christ. But notwithstanding all this, I find such a thorough reformation is never to be hoped for, nor in the least expected to proceed from himself and his brethren, or from any such ministers, because he assures us, ⁷ ‘ They, who profess even a true religion, originally built upon rational grounds, and have themselves established it on a different foundation, and have led the people into a belief of it on that false bottom, are likely to be for keeping the rational grounds of it out of their sight; lest coming to the knowledge of them they should see the absurdity and hurtful consequences, of having religion stand upon any foot but its own.’ [*Whether Mr. Mole speaks this of his own knowledge and experience, I shall not pretend to say: but as he further observes*] ‘ The truly rational and scriptural method of propagating faith is very different from this, it cannot be interested in, or justly answerable for the absurdities, it is chargeable with. Training up children, as God says *Abraham* would his, to do justice and judgment; or as *Solomon* speaks, *in the way they should go*; or as *St. Paul* exhorts, *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*; is a quite different thing from training them up in the belief of doctrines, which are commanded to be assented to, or the practice of rites, which are commanded to be observed by any civil or church law whatsoever.’ [*either in England, Scotland, or Rome.*]

And the reasons, why we must not expect so much good, nor hope for such a reformation from their ministers, seem to be assigned in p. 76; where he honestly confesses, that ‘ since Christianity has been established under human forms, with the sanction and authority of civil laws, and a clergy has been settled as a principle part of such religious establishments; the plan of religion has been greatly altered, and the work of its ministers greatly enlarged. By this means defending the rights of those,

‘ who

⁷ Ibid. p. 71.

‘ who have established it, the method in which it has been
 ‘ done, and the dignities and emoluments, with which
 ‘ they have been settled upon this new foundation, have
 ‘ much taken them off from attendance to those offices,
 ‘ to which they were obliged upon the antient scriptural
 ‘ one. And as the plan of religion has been greatly al-
 ‘ tered, the method of education has undergone a great
 ‘ change by it; since, instead of teaching the principles
 ‘ of reason and the holy scripture, it has hereby been
 ‘ made to consist in teaching the manner and matter of
 ‘ such establishments, which in many things are evident-
 ‘ ly contrary to both. And if parents of families, and
 ‘ pastors of churches, instead of concurring in such a me-
 ‘ thod of rational and scriptural education, which is cal-
 ‘ culated to lead to true faith and right conduct in human
 ‘ life, shall agree in substituting a very different one in its
 ‘ room, whereby men are led into false notions both of
 ‘ the faith and practice of true Christianity, unhappy
 ‘ must be the case of such as come under their care; they
 ‘ must necessarily come into life under great disadvan-
 ‘ tages, which their parents and pastors will be most
 ‘ chargeable with the guilt of, tho’ themselves must in
 ‘ consequence be considerable sufferers, . . . as, where re-
 ‘ ligion is prescribed by human authority, and received on
 ‘ that ground, is really the case.’ For *says he*, p. 78.
 ‘ They are the corruptions mingled with it, the false prin-
 ‘ ciples upon which it is recommended, and the crying
 ‘ ambition, avarice, cruelty, and every contrariety to
 ‘ it in the character of its preachers, which render an
 ‘ examination into it more intricate and difficult now,
 ‘ than it was at first; and are the great and standing ob-
 ‘ stacles to men’s coming, or being disposed to come, to
 ‘ the faith of it.’

All these passages, and many others, seem pointed
 against our established church; and therefore I was willing
 to let Mr. *Mole* see how justly they may be applied to
 Pædobaptist churches of other denominations. But wav-
 ing further remarks in this view at present, I will now
 attend his answer to this alarming objection, which the
 author of *Christianity not founded on Argument* has in-
 troduced after this manner, p. 9. that ‘ Application was
 ‘ not intended by the gospel to be made to the understand-
 ‘ ing. I shall endeavour yet farther to evince, by
 ‘ looking a little into life and practice upon the occasion,
 ‘ by tracing this faith to its known original, and pointing

‘ directly to the great root whence all our religious im-
 ‘ pressions notoriously spring. By asking you farther,
 ‘ Can a man be baptized into a rational religion ?’

By life and practice here, this author does not seem to intend the duties of morality, but only those religious acts, which some Christians perform, as the positive appointments of the gospel. And as those, who are strangers to the christian religion, are most likely to pass judgment of it by what they see and observe in the life and practice of its professors, performed by them as the appointments of Christ, and essential parts of his religion, in order to their commencing Christians, or becoming members of his church ; and as the kirk of *Scotland*, and other Pædobaptists, as well as our established church, have changed or laid aside the rational subject of baptism, and substituted instead thereof an irrational one ; and have also superseded baptism by an act which hath nothing of the nature of baptism in it, for where dipping is not practised, there can be no baptism ; because baptism and dipping are the same thing, neither will the institution of Christ admit of two different modes : So Mr. *Mole* had from hence the justest reason to return the following answer to him, whereby he hath indeed represented, and set forth, in the strongest and most moving terms, that great apostasy or defection of Pædobaptists, from the purity of christian baptism, together with the absolute necessity they are under of a reformation herein ; if they would for the future prevent such objections against Christianity, and take away occasion from those, who are perpetually seeking occasion to ridicule our most holy religion ; and thereby expose it to scorn and contempt as a very irrational thing, which has extorted this strange answer from him.

‘ And must we indeed be concluded by this manner of
 ‘ proof ? Is the christian religion to be judged of, by what
 ‘ appears in the life and practice of those, who make
 ‘ profession of it ? Is this a likely way to know, what
 ‘ the christian religion is ? And is it just, that it should
 ‘ bare the blame of all the egregious follies and absurdities,
 ‘ which pass in the world under its name ? He may
 ‘ look as much and as long as he pleases, and we may attend
 ‘ him in his searches, without ever having this point
 ‘ evinced from any thing, that is to be discovered in life
 ‘ and practice upon this occasion.’ A most melancholy
 account

account indeed ! But he ought to have excepted the Baptist churches, because they have kept this *ordinance* as it was *at first delivered* ; tho', with respect to the practice of his own and the kirk of *Scotland*, he had too much occasion to add still further. ' He may indeed be able to shew ' from thence, that men pretending a commission to ' teach Christianity make no application by it to the understandings of men, but endeavour to extinguish and ' put them out. Or he may be able to shew from thence, ' that many call themselves believers, and pretend to ' faith, which neither their reason nor understanding have ' ever brought them to.' And how indeed should it be otherwise, whilst they account *infants believers*, and *holy Christians before baptism* : and by their ceremonies pretend to *cloath* them *with pureness and perfection*, and make them members, or take them *into the bosom of the visible church* ; before they have any reason or *understanding to be applied unto*. And therefore, as Mr. *Mole* proceeds, ' possibly he ' may shew, that some very trivial matter [*even infant-sprinkling*] is the known original, and great root, whence ' all the religious impressions of great numbers of professors [*both in Scotland and England*] notoriously spring. ' But will this prove, that the commission such men claim, ' is really from God, of like nature with that which ' Christ and his apostles acted with, and exercised in the ' manner, wherein they exercise theirs ? Will this prove, ' that the faith such men boast of, is the true faith, ' which is required by God in order to salvation ; ' and that reason cannot lead to true faith, nor be ' the principle, which God intended should do it ? ' And will it hence be evinced, that the known original ' and great root, whence all the religious impressions of ' such persons notoriously spring, is the real original and ' true root of that faith in Christ, which God requires, ' and sincere Christians exercise in him ? If not, what is ' this conduct of our author, ' [*of looking into life and practice, either under the English, or Scottish establishments, for Christ's institution of baptism*] ' but running away from ' faith [*or the ordinance of baptism*] in order to meet it ; and ' turning his back upon it, in order to take a view of it ? ' He should have looked a little into the scriptures, from ' whence alone it can be known, what Christianity [*Christian baptism*] and the true faith of it is. Looking into ' life and practice among many, both teachers and professors, is the way indeed to know what they are not, ' and may serve the purposes of misrepresenting their true ' nature ;

‘ nature; but can be no likely way to do them justice. It
 ‘ is like looking into the church of Antichrist to find
 ‘ that of Christ, or into Popery for the doctrine of the
 ‘ scriptures, where they are hid, and to be found only by
 ‘ looking on the reverse.’ And hence Mr. *Mole* proceeds.

‘ It is queried : Can a man be baptized into a rational re-
 ‘ ligion ? *And answers*, Can there be any inconvenience in
 ‘ answering in the affirmative ? Were not men ordered to
 ‘ be baptized into the christian religion ? [*yes, but babes and*
 ‘ *infants were not*] And must it not be either a rational
 ‘ or an irrational one ? And surely a man can as well be
 ‘ baptized into the former, as into the latter. [*but a babe*
 ‘ *or infant cannot*] The nature of Christianity, as a ra-
 ‘ tional religion, is, I think, as well delineated in the
 ‘ practice of baptism, as it is possible for reason to be re-
 ‘ presented in any rite. For considering it as carrying in
 ‘ its nature the promise of full forgiveness of sins, that
 ‘ are past, and the obligation to complete holiness for the
 ‘ future ; how could any external rite of initiation, or
 ‘ manner of taking the profession upon them, better
 ‘ serve to express and represent them both, than the wash-
 ‘ ing of the bodies of such, as did so, with water ? This
 ‘ was a proper symbol of that remission, or cleansing of
 ‘ them from guilt, which they enjoyed by the tenor of
 ‘ the gospel covenant ; and of that future purity of life
 ‘ and manners, to which they were obliged, and freely
 ‘ consented, by it. In both these views Christianity ap-
 ‘ pears to be a rational religion : and why might not a
 ‘ man be thus baptized into it ? Why might not the com-
 ‘ mission to preach it be executed, and such baptism re-
 ‘ quired in an application to the understanding ? Or how
 ‘ can any religion, that is worthy of God, and fit for
 ‘ mankind, be propagated without such application ?’

What Mr. *Mole* can think, when he compares all this
 with his own unscriptural practice of infant-sprinkling, I
 know not ; but surely his own conscience must tell him,
 that he has here given a most exact description of our
 practice, and of that of the primitive church ; and that
 every tittle of it is absolutely incompatible with the prac-
 tice of his own, and every other Pædobaptist church
 whatsoever.

‘ But, says Mr. *Mole*, it is further queried :’ “ Where
 “ is reason concerned, when babes accept the terms of
 “ salvation by deputy, and are intitled to all the privileges
 “ of the most extensive faith by another’s act ? By the
 “ baptismal

“ baptismal ceremony they commence true believers at
 “ once, and are made heirs of heaven, you know, by
 “ the faith of their bondsmen ; whilst as yet they have
 “ not the least share or symptom of understanding them-
 “ selves, and may in all possibility never live to attain
 “ one ; and which, if they had at the time, I know not
 “ yet, how they could well give a rational assent by
 “ proxy. Yet such is the pleasure and ordinance of God
 “ himself in this point.” To all this Mr. *Mole* replies,
 ‘ I do not wonder, that our author was for looking into
 ‘ life and practice on this occasion, when what he wanted
 ‘ to find, was not to be met with in the scriptures. It is
 ‘ the principle of protestants, and rational believers, to
 ‘ look into the scriptures, as the sole rule of their faith
 ‘ and practice, and not into the life and practice of any
 ‘ men living for their religion ; as well knowing the very
 ‘ great difference of that, which is contained in the one,
 ‘ from what passes for such in the other.’

This is plainly giving up infant-baptism, as an un-
 scriptural thing, and declaring that, tho’ it passes so ge-
 nerally among Christians for a religious rite ; yet it is not
 contained in the Bible, but is greatly different from that,
 which is there prescribed. And hence it is very easy to
 discern, what conduct ought to be expected from Mr.
Mole, and others under such convictions, if they would
 make the scriptures the sole rule of their faith and prac-
 tice, as he says, it is the principle of protestants and ra-
 tional believers to do. Besides, as Infidels and others are
 most ready to form their conceptions of Christianity from
 what they observe in the life and practice of its professors,
 hence also arises an additional motive for their reforma-
 tion in the case of baptism, which is very evident from
 what he adds in these words. ‘ And as our author, who
 ‘ usually picks up some shreds and broken pieces of scrip-
 ‘ ture, which either of themselves, or with a little art,
 ‘ are made to carry some sound, tho’ that be all, in his
 ‘ favour,’ [*a practice too much like what our Pædobaptists
 themselves in their controversies with us are guilty of*] ‘ has
 ‘ not practised that method upon this occasion ; I do not
 ‘ see, what the christian religion, or the rational believers
 ‘ of it, have further to do with these absurdities, which
 ‘ he has ventured to charge them with, than to disown
 ‘ and disavow them, as they very well may.’ How Mr.
Mole can think so, I know not ; for I am sure it must
 appear with a very ill grace till they are reformed, and
 have

have wholly laid aside those *egregious follies, absurdities,* and unscriptural practices, because they must otherwise appear manifestly inconsistent with themselves. Besides, it will give Infidels too much cause to reproach them with being insincere, either in what they do, or in what they say; and whether that will be any credit or service to themselves, or the christian religion, it behoves them seriously to consider. ‘For, says Mr. Mole, where shall we find in the word of God any mention of deputies, or bondsmen, or proxies, in the matters of salvation?’ Certainly none at all. No, nor yet of *infants being clad with pureness and perfection in baptism,* or of their being *Christians, and federally holy before baptism,* intitling them to baptism. On the contrary, we are therein assured, that even the righteousness of *Noah, Daniel, and Job,* would avail so little for any besides themselves, that they should deliver neither son nor daughter, so much as from temporal evils, and much less from those which are future; because God affirms, *Ezek. xiv. 12—20, they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.* And how then can any Christians so vainly pretend, that the faith, obedience, and holiness of parents, shall be imputed to their descendants through all generations; so as to justify them in the neglect of the positive appointments of God, as much designed, and according to the nature and reason of their institution, equally as necessary for them all, as for their parents at first? And moreover, what signifies all their pretended *federal holiness, and faith derived from parents,* constituting them *holy Christians,* and intitling them to *baptism,* or that *purity and perfection,* which they suppose to be conferred in baptism? We have no such ridiculous and absurd notions in scripture; ‘and, as Mr. Mole says, if they are not there, what have we to do with them? Or how can they be said to belong to Christianity?’ And as this Infidel’s objection, designed by him to expose Christianity, is entirely founded upon those opinions and practices amongst Christians, which are no part of the christian religion; so it must afford the Baptist churches no small satisfaction to find, that they are no ways concerned in it. For, as Mr. Mole further observes; ‘We should be apt to form an advantageous opinion of the beauty of a person, when we find that those, who have endeavoured to decry it, have done it by keeping us from the sight of the original, and presenting us only with false copies. It may be some decrease of credit to the christian religion to observe the
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‘ most wily of its enemies oppose it, by falsely ascribing
 ‘ to it, what it never taught, and feigning absurdities,
 ‘ which are no where to be found in it. Men never more
 ‘ shew the weakness, or that themselves feel the weakness
 ‘ of the cause, which they espouse, than when they are
 ‘ reduced to the method of misrepresenting what they op-
 ‘ pose. Our author has gathered a heap of absurdities,
 ‘ as it is very easy to do, from some modern formula’s of
 ‘ religious doctrines, or the modern practice of some reli-
 ‘ gious societies, which are for the most part full of them;
 ‘ and falsely charged them upon Christianity. But what-
 ‘ ever he is for looking to, I own, I am for looking to the
 ‘ law and to the testimony, and letting life and practice
 ‘ alone upon this occasion; as knowing it to be a com-
 ‘ mon thing with those who look to them, to take the
 ‘ precept or practice of man for the pleasure and ordi-
 ‘ nance of God himself in any point.’

Sad and dismal indeed is the defection from real Chris-
 tianity, and there is too much truth in this conclusion;
 for which reason Mr. *Mole* ought to think, that *looking to*
the law and to the testimony in relation to baptism, with-
 out a strict conformity in practice, will avail nothing.
 And therefore till our Pædobaptist brethren shall think fit
 to lay aside those human appointments, and reform their
 practice; they make it absolutely necessary for some to
 hold out a light of warning, and direction upon every
 suitable occasion, as I have now once more endeavoured
 to do, that persons may not mistake the precepts and
 practice of men for the pleasure and ordinance of God
 himself in this point.

As Mr. *Mole*’s Reply to this Infidel’s objection ends
 here, I shall follow him no farther than just to transcribe
 some part of his introduction. And if the rules there
 laid down had always been carefully attended to by Chris-
 tians, and they had governed themselves accordingly, we
 should have been so far from having any controversy
 about infant-baptism, that we should never once have
 heard the name of it. He begins his answer thus:

‘ It is much to be wished, that, in all inquiries about
 ‘ the christian religion, that only should be considered as
 ‘ such, and come into the question, which lies originally
 ‘ in the sacred writings of the New Testament. For
 ‘ Christianity as it is there laid down, and as it has been
 ‘ since established in the various writings and laws of men,
 ‘ are different things, and very wide of one another.

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' To interest Christianity, not in what Christ, but in
 ' what men have made it, and to direct our inquiries, and
 ' determine our sentiments about it from these later
 ' glosses, is much the same thing; as if we were to judge
 ' of the nature and meaning of the law of *Moses* from the
 ' false interpretations and spurious additions, with which
 ' the Pharisees had corrupted it: which, however they
 ' went under the name of the *Jewish* religion, very wide-
 ' ly differed from it; as what the systems and formula's of
 ' many modern churches set forth for the christian reli-
 ' gion, does differ from what is truly such.

' Nothing shews more weakness than to receive things
 ' so different as one and the same, or wickedness than
 ' knowing that difference to represent them as the same.
 ' For whatever is called Christianity, that only is deserv-
 ' edly esteemed so, which lies in the scriptures; and that
 ' is a very vain objection against the true doctrine of
 ' Christ, which is drawn from it, as it lies in the most
 ' authorised systems and compositions of men.

' And in stating the doctrine of Christianity, it is
 ' scarcely consistent with the justice that is due to it, or
 ' the sincerity with which our inquiries about it ought to
 ' be conducted, to select a few scattered sentences from
 ' the scriptures, and consider them as intire and inde-
 ' pendent propositions: since so detached they may be
 ' easily made to express a meaning different from the true
 ' one, or even quite contrary to it; which can only be
 ' learnt by viewing them in the connection with those
 ' discourses, from which they are taken, and considering
 ' the purpose, to which the speaker or writer applies
 ' them.

' Nor is it the likeliest way to give a fair account of
 ' the doctrine of the scriptures, if leaving the places, in
 ' which it is most fully and plainly declared, we form
 ' a system founded on obscure and difficult passages;
 ' and presume to determine the sense and meaning of
 ' them arbitrarily and at pleasure, without any regard to
 ' the view of the speaker, or to the argument of his dis-
 ' course, or to any other places, wherein his meaning is
 ' more plainly expressed by himself, and more easily to be
 ' discovered by us.

' In interpreting the words, or representing the senti-
 ' ments of any other writers, we never make use of such
 ' methods as these; or think, we have any right to use
 ' them: and if we did, whatever we might esteem our-
 ' selves,

‘ selves, we should hardly with others pass for fair inter-
 ‘ preters. And why should such methods be taken, or al-
 ‘ lowed, in representing the sense of the sacred writings;
 ‘ which are esteemed misrepresentations in the case of
 ‘ all other writings, and reckoned highly injurious to
 ‘ them?’

S E C T. V.

Remarks on Dr. Doddridge's Letters.

I COME now to examine Dr. *Doddridge's* Answer to the same objection, and shall also therein apply many passages of his letters to the subject in debate. He begins after this manner :

‘ There yet remains to be considered the argument
 ‘ you draw from infant-baptism, which you apprehend
 ‘ would be very absurd, if it were not supposed to be at-
 ‘ tended with such a communication of the spirit, as that
 ‘ which is now in debate between us,’ which he thus ex-
 ‘ presses as the sense of his author. ‘ And finally, that if
 ‘ faith were built upon any other foundation, it would
 ‘ be utterly absurd to pray for its increase; (page 10) and
 ‘ that infant-baptism, here taken for granted to be a di-
 ‘ vine institution, would on any other scheme be unjustifi-
 ‘ able and unintelligible. (page 69) These, Sir, are (so far
 ‘ as I can find) the grand foundations, on which you build
 ‘ the doctrine I am now opposing.’

But whether upon the doctor's own, and the common principles of his party, at whose request this third letter was written, there be not too much ground given for the enemies of revelation to make such suppositions, and propound such questions, it behoves them all seriously to consider; tho', even without those suppositions, I have clearly enough shewn, that infant-baptism, as their sprinkling is falsely called, is a very *absurd* thing: and moreover, it is* it seems *the grand foundation* which gives Infidels a handle to scoff and deride it, and to cast the greatest reproach and contempt upon the christian name. And of this, by the following words, the doctor himself appears to be sufficiently sensible. “ Can a man, say you, be

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“ baptized

* Third Letter, p. 54. † Ibid. p. 30.

“ baptized into a rational religion ?” (by which I suppose
 ‘ you mean, can that religion be rational, of which in-
 ‘ fant-baptism is a part ?’) This thought, and the very
 words also, the doctor seems to have taken *from the*
ingenious Oxford Reply; and they as plainly shew, that
 in the doctor’s apprehension, Infidels may take occasion
 from thence, to represent Christianity, as a childish irra-
 tional thing, which is indeed what the author ² ‘ endeav-
 ‘ ours to evince, by looking a little into life and practice
 ‘ upon the occasion, by tracing this faith to its known
 ‘ original, and pointing directly to the great root whence,’
he says, ‘ all our religious impressions notoriously spring.’
 And ³ ‘ will help us to a just and uniform account of its
 ‘ whole nature, whilst it points readily back to its source
 ‘ of baptism.’ And hence, in agreement with his title,
 he seems ⁴ ‘ fully persuaded, that the judging at all of re-
 ‘ ligious matters is not the proper province of reason, or
 ‘ indeed an affair where she has any concern. Your
 ‘ boasted rational faith, *says he*, is what I would fain
 ‘ shew you to be a false, unwarranted notion of your own,
 ‘ and without the least ground to support it, either in na-
 ‘ ture or revelation. I mean, that your assent to revealed
 ‘ truths should be founded upon the conviction of your
 ‘ understanding.’ And therefore he adds, ⁵ ‘ It is impos-
 ‘ sible, surely, when we consider to whom we must as-
 ‘ cribe them, that any such absurd schemes can any long-
 ‘ er be supposed, that we can ever imagine, that the great
 ‘ author and finisher of our faith should have contrived
 ‘ us an irrational one, to be afterwards superseded, or
 ‘ even confirmed by a rational one.’

The reasoning of this writer in these passages is agree-
 able to what Dr. *Doddridge* says, as follows, ⁶ ‘ For the il-
 ‘ lustration of this, you must give me leave to remind
 ‘ you, that both the mosaic and christian dispensations
 ‘ have been much misrepresented, in consequence of
 ‘ mens taking their notions of them, rather from the
 ‘ conduct of their professors, than from the institutes of
 ‘ their respective founders.’ And according to our Lord’s
 own metaphors, Mat. vii. 16—20. *Do men gather grapes*
of thorns, or figs of thistles? How can we expect it should
 be otherwise? But is it not greatly to be lamented, that
 the best, most holy, most excellent, and most perfect re-
 ligion,

² *Christianity not founded, &c.* p. 9. ³ *Ibid.* p. 10. ⁴ p. 7.
⁵ p. 10. ⁶ *First Letter*, p. 13.

ligion, which ever appeared in the world; a religion in itself every way worthy of God, and fit for men, every way salutary and beneficial to the virtuous and good, should, by the unwarrantable additions, alterations, and unscriptural practices of its professors, and in some measure to their own shame and confusion, be thus exposed to the contempt, and derision of its avowed enemies, in these words?

7 “ Where is reason concerned, when babes accept the terms of salvation by deputy, and are intitled to all the privileges of the most extensive faith by another’s act? By the baptismal ceremony they commence true believers at once, and are made heirs of heaven, you know, by the faith of their bondsmen.” (page 9.) “ And to the same purpose, in your 69th page, ‘ The merits of the most finished conviction are already theirs by imputation, &c.’ ”

This is all that the doctor quotes from this writer’s objection on the head of baptism, but if my readers turn back to page 14. they will there see it more at large: tho’ to this the doctor replies, very honestly indeed, but in such a manner, as if he was conscious, that his own practice of infant-sprinkling was also indefensible. For he says, ‘ Now here, Sir, I am obliged to say, that if there be any form of baptism in the christian world, which justifies such inferences and such a manner of speaking, I am extremely sorry for it. But I am very confident, the scripture teaches nothing of this kind;’ [*no, nor yet the doctor’s own method and pleas for infant-baptism, any more than those of our established church, the kirk of Scotland, or the church of Rome.*] ‘ And,’ as he very justly observes, ‘ it is by that, [*viz. the scripture*] and not by the rubrick [*or customs*] of any particular church, whether Popish or Protestant, that the merits of this cause are to be tried.’ ‘ Nor, as he elsewhere asserts, ⁸ is this position only inconsistent with the pertinency of any reasoning whatsoever, but particularly inconsistent with that footing on which you profess to place Christianity, when its rational proofs are [*attacked or*] given up.’

But the doctor proceeds thus, ‘ I cannot see, how any sponsor, whether he be, or be not a parent, can pretend to answer for a child, that he shall believe, or obey the gospel: Nor does the bringing children to baptism,

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7 Third Letter, p. 55.

⁸ First Letter, p. 10.

‘ by any means imply it.’ Surely the doctor had forgotten the rubric of our established church, which positively asserts it, as much as he had forgotten himself immediately after, when he tells us; *they are thereby listed under the banners of Christ, so far as they could be listed by the act of another; so that they must either confirm, or, in effect at least, renounce what was then done.* But certainly the doctor must know, there are great numbers of sober persons, who neither *confirm* nor *renounce what was then done*; who can never be prevailed upon to join in communion with any Christian society, nor yet openly, and professedly renounce and deny Christianity. And many others there are, who never think, nor concern themselves at all about the matter. He himself tells us of *triflers in religion, such as are in doubt; but not solicitous to bring their doubts to an issue.* Does the doctor mean any or all of these, when he speaks of some, *who, in effect, renounce what was done?* Surely he should have ascertained his meaning a little more clearly, that we might not mistake him. And does the doctor think, that tho’ he gives up the unscriptural ceremonies practised by our established church, and the kirk of *Scotland*, that he can maintain his own? This he will find impossible. Besides, his own concessions are so many and so strong, that he cannot evade them. 9 He hath ‘ now risen [*up to*] plead the injured cause of God and virtue, against all the wretched ‘ train of sophistry;’ [*which this infidel writer hath laid together*] ‘ and I will venture to say, that the arguments ‘ and the distinctions, by which he confutes [*him*] shall ‘ be [*his*] own answer,’ for which reason I shall bestow very little else upon him. He bespeaks his infidel thus: 1 ‘ As you take it for granted in the whole of your letter, ‘ that infant-baptism is a christian ordinance, you will allow me to mention it as a common principle, tho’ ‘ little of my argument will depend upon its being so.’

Here the doctor is very willing to agree with the Infidel, in taking that for granted, which ought first to be proved, but there is a vast difference between them; for the Infidel may be thought excusable enough in doing so, because, as he does not believe the scriptures to be of divine authority, he cannot be under so great obligation to examine them upon that point, as the doctor is. Moreover, as he forms his judgment of Christianity, and likewise of the positive

positive duties therein required, from what he observes to be the belief and practice of Christians in general; how should he be supposed to think any otherwise about it? On the contrary, the doctor acknowledges, ² ‘ That *his business is with the law, and with the testimony, by which only the merits of this cause are to be tried*, and therefore it is absolutely inexcusable in him to practise it, and yet evade the proof of it, as he does, by saying, ‘ What reason ‘ we have to conclude infant-baptism a rite of divine ‘ institution, I shall not now enquire. It is enough if ‘ I shew, that admitting it to be so, (which I really think ‘ it is very reasonable that we should admit) it by no ‘ means implies this absurd consequence.’

But to use the doctor’s own words immediately before, *I am very confident, the scripture teaches nothing of this kind; and it is by that, and not by the rubric of any particular church, whether Popish or Protestant, that the merits of this cause are to be tried*, and therefore if we do admit it without any proof from thence, notwithstanding adult-baptism alone is so very plainly and clearly taught there; so these very absurd, and most pernicious consequences must necessarily arise from it, namely, that the laws of Christ in this institution are not much to be regarded; that the wisest and best dispensation, which was ever given to men by the greatest law-giver, that ever appeared, and was sent from God, is so very defective, that the imperfections thereof are forced to be supplied, according as the various fancies of men shall dictate, or suggest: notwithstanding one of the most eminent *ambassadors of Christ* could, in a solemn manner, appeal to God, that he had *not shunned to declare unto his church all the counsel of God; and kept back nothing that was profitable unto them. Acts xx. 20—27*; and hath warned us, in the strongest terms, not to admit *any other gospel than that which he had preached*, even tho’ it should be brought by himself, or by *an angel from heaven*, upon pain of the severest anathema, *Galat. i. 6—9*.

It may indeed be very reasonable for the doctor, with all such as practise it, to admit it, because otherwise their own consciences must condemn them, as much as their own words, and concessions do: but what is this to them, who absolutely deny, there is any reason to conclude, that infant-baptism is a rite of divine institution; on the contrary, are well persuaded that there is all the reason in
the

the world to conclude, it is not? And what will the doctor's admitting it in this manner, signify to an Infidel, who must thereby see it is a mere begging the question; and only taking that for granted, which ought first to be clearly proved from that very rule, by which Christians pretend to walk, and to be guided in all matters of religion. This the doctor never attempts, for in all his letters, where he occasionally mentions it, he takes it for granted, as I have already shewn in some, and might add more instances. The doctor imagines indeed, that 'other ends might be answered by it, valuable enough to justify the wisdom of the ordinance;' but let it be considered, as the christian rule assures us, *I Cor. i. ii. iii.* That God will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the mighty; and the base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not [esteemed] to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. Whereby St. Paul according to the grace of God given unto him, as a wise master builder, laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble: every mans work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so, as by fire. Let no man deceive himself: If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world,

world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God: for it is written, he taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, the Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men. 1 Cor. i. 19. to ch. iii. 21. I shall leave the application of these scriptures to the doctor, because, with a long train of may's and may be's, he says, ' other ends might be answered by it, ' valuable enough to justify the wisdom of the ordinance : ' As for instance, hereby parents may give a public token ' of their faith in Christianity, and their consequent desire that their children may partake of its benefits, and ' answer its demands: hereby they may solemnly declare ' their resolution to train them up in the institutions of ' our blessed master, and their resignation of them to the ' disposal of divine providence, if God should see fit early to remove them: This also may remain, throughout ' all generations, as a memorial of the tenderness which ' our Lord shewed to little children, and of the perpetuity ' of that covenant, the efficacy of which reaches from ' one generation to another: and to add no more, it may ' lay a foundation for affectionate addresses to the children afterwards, as being already listed under the banners of ' Christ, so far as they could be listed by the act of another ; ' so that they must either confirm, or, in effect at least, ' renounce what was then done.'

But how should they renounce that, in which they never engaged themselves? As they never consented to the act, can they be at all bound by it? Besides, the practice of these things, which are no where appointed, or required in the word of God, but are only the fancies and contrivances of men, mere human traditions, are attended with this ill effect, that the commandments of God are thereby made void, *Matt. xv. 2—9. Mark vii. 2—9.* By these thousands of sincere Christians are kept from submitting to Christ's own institution of baptism, to which they would otherwise have yielded themselves, in the uprightness of their hearts; if their minds had not been forestalled with this error, their judgments misled, and their obedience hereby prevented. This is the great, I must not say *valuable, end*, which is answered by infant-baptism; and in this they, who practise it, have no just cause to glory, as this *wily Infidel* has now shewn them. And therefore, without entering into a more particular *discussion* of the doctor's *valuable ends*, ' I must' in *his own words upon another point*, ' take leave to premise

‘ one preliminary; which is, that the question we are
 ‘ debating, is not by any means to be decided by human
 ‘ authority. I am very sensible, Sir, *says the doctor*, that
 ‘ some eminent divines of the *Roman* communion, and
 ‘ the established church at home, as well as among our
 ‘ Nonconformists, have, in the zeal and humility of
 ‘ their hearts, expressed themselves in a manner which
 ‘ cannot be defended, and thereby have given too plausible
 ‘ an occasion for [*this Infidel’s*] dangerous and fatal
 ‘ misrepresentations. But my business is with the
 ‘ law, and with the testimony; and where these holy
 ‘ and excellent men have not spoken according to that
 ‘ rule, I cannot believe that celestial light to have been
 ‘ in them, or suppose their minds under the guidance of
 ‘ that spirit, whom, tho’ by ill-judged methods, it was
 ‘ undoubtedly their sincere and affectionate desire to glorify.
 ‘ Taking the matter therefore, as the scripture
 ‘ represents it, it will be very easy to shew,’ that there is
 not the least foundation there for the practice of infant-baptism,
 to which this passage of the doctor’s may be justly applied;
 the truth of which is, I think, evident enough from his
 answering this writer in the manner he has done. For he hath
 no where quoted a single text of scripture for it, but
 wheresoever he mentions it, or in the least glances at it,
 he always, with the infidel whom he opposes, takes it for
 granted, *as a common principle, a thing general acknowledged*;
 which, as I before observed, is a mere begging the question.
 He must know, it hath always been opposed by those
 of our persuasion, as a practice concerning which the scripture
 is totally silent, and therefore, this his neglect, if he knows
 there is scripture for it; or else his practice, if he knows
 there is not, must be absolutely inexcusable. And,

As to the many writings, which have been published in
 behalf of this unscriptural practice, I may very justly say
 of them, as the doctor does of those for infidelity.
 4 ‘ Sad indeed is the drudgery our brethren must go thro’
 ‘ in reading such authors, . . . but the confirmation which
 ‘ their faith may receive, by the very efforts made to
 ‘ overthrow it, [*our practice, and to establish their own*] will,
 ‘ I hope, in many instances, be a sufficient reward. And
 ‘ as these pieces, especially in the hand of second rate
 ‘ writers, contain little more than a confident and un-
 ‘ wearied

3 Third Letter, p. 9, 10.

4 First Letter, p. 46, 47.

‘ wearied repetition of the same objections, [*and arguments,*] which have been answered perhaps many scores and hundreds of times, without taking any notice of those replies; (which, whether it be owing to the learning, or modesty of the authors, I will not undertake to say;) one who is acquainted with these controversies will be able to dispatch large volumes in a little time, and will see that many of them need no new answers. All which will be circumstances of some consolation under so tedious a task.’ And as he says elsewhere, ⁵ ‘ Answers will be suggested, with those objections; and he will soon be weary of hearing such poor unsatisfactory things, as most of the cavils of Infidels [*or Pædobaptists*] are. And here again, the good habits, and dispositions formed in his mind, will be of great service. He will perceive, that Christianity [*with adult-baptism*] wears so favourable an aspect, and opens upon him so fine a prospect, that he will not hunt after objections against it; as a man is not studious to find a flaw in writings, by which he stands intitled to the reversion of some noble estate: and when they accidentally start up in his way, he will soon see, that many of them are grounded on notorious falsehood, and are in themselves despicably mean; especially when set against the great arguments for it, of which he is already possessed.’

But to return to the doctor’s answer, ‘ all these valuable purposes, and many more, *says he*, may be answered by infant-baptism.’ And because the doctor is a little sparing here, I will take the liberty to enumerate them in his own words elsewhere. ⁶ ‘ Nevertheless, for the farther illustration of the subject, I shall freely tell you, how I apprehend the case to stand, with regard to the generality of the common people, who are in good earnest in the profession of religion; readily acknowledging, tho’ with great grief, that there are thousands and ten thousands, who wear the name of Christians as by meer accident, without at all considering its meaning, reason, or obligation; a case very consistent with the possibility of their being better informed, and rationally convinced.’ ⁷ ‘ That this is the case of so many, I very readily acknowledge, that, thro’ a negligence, for which I fear a multitude of parents and ministers

I 2

‘ have

⁵ Ibid. p. 21, 22. ⁶ First Letter, p. 12. ⁷ Ibid. p. 23.

‘ have a terrible account to render before God. . . . By
 ‘ far the greater part of professing Christians have proba-
 ‘ bly no better reason to give for their religion, than that
 ‘ they were early baptized [*he should have said rantized*]
 ‘ into it, and have been trained up in some of its exter-
 ‘ nal forms. Far from being instructed in its evidences,
 ‘ they are hardly taught its doctrines, or its precepts ; or
 ‘ superficially learn them from those, who do not them-
 ‘ selves seem to be in good earnest concerned about the one
 ‘ or the other. The fatal consequence is too plain. The
 ‘ corruptions of nature, abetted by the force of evil ex-
 ‘ amples, prevail against them ; and they are early plung-
 ‘ ed into such licentious practices, that if they ever reflect
 ‘ on the most evident and express declarations of the word
 ‘ of God, they must immediately see, that they are con-
 ‘ demned by it.

‘ Now there is no reason to wonder, if many of this
 ‘ sort of Christians are easy proselytes to infidelity. It
 ‘ is no surprising thing, if a bold jest thrown upon scrip-
 ‘ ture, or a confident senseless assertion of its falshood,
 ‘ (perhaps from a person, on whose word hardly any thing
 ‘ else would be believed,) have with them all the weight
 ‘ of a demonstration. They will be little concerned to
 ‘ ask information, or consider how objections may be
 ‘ answered. Those magical words, priestcraft, and the
 ‘ prejudice of education, stun and terrify them. They
 ‘ submit as [*his Infidel*] gravely expresses it, (page 75.)
 ‘ in the impotency and impuberty of a dutiful understand-
 ‘ ing, in the tractable simplicity of unpractised reason :
 ‘ with the obsequious and humble acquiescence of a babe,
 ‘ they sit down to learn their lesson” too ; ‘ and their un-
 ‘ belief, after they have attained the stature of men,
 ‘ is just as blind and implicit, as the faith of their child-
 ‘ hood was.

‘ This, Sir, is undoubtedly the case with many : and you
 ‘ cannot but have observed, what large companies in the
 ‘ free-thinking army are raised and enlisted from a-
 ‘ mong these vagabonds. But the generality of men among
 ‘ us, as in every nation, go on thoughtlessly in the re-
 ‘ ligion in which they were educated : hearing the truth
 ‘ of it often asserted, and perhaps never hearing it con-
 ‘ tradicted, they entertain no doubts on the subject, but
 ‘ grow old in a mere speculative and ineffectual assent to
 ‘ Christianity. And if their heart at any time smite
 ‘ them, with the contrariety of their temper and con-
 ‘ duct

‘ duct to the rules which they acknowledge to be divine,
 ‘ they seek their shelter in the hope of making their peace
 ‘ with God, (as they commonly express it,) before they
 ‘ go out of the world ; and perhaps abuse some of the
 ‘ noblest discoveries which the gospel makes, as an en-
 ‘ couragement to continue in those sins and follies, from
 ‘ which it was expressly designed to reclaim them.’

The doctor hath here given us a dismal, melancholy train of evils indeed, and they are such by his limitation of them, as we may reasonably suppose, would not have so frequently existed, had it not been for infant-baptism ; because according to him, they arise from amongst those infants, to whom that is supposed to be administered ; and the numbers of them it seems are so very great, that *far the greater part of professing Christians have probably no better reason to give for their religion*, than that they were early baptized, or rather rantized into it. And such as these are they, *who are easily led into infidelity ; and whose unbelief, he says, after they have attained the stature of men, is just as blind and implicit, as the faith of their childhood was.* And therefore, if there was a possibility of giving them faith, and making them Christians in that way, it would have been much better for such unhappy creatures to have had nothing at all done to them, because, as the apostle assures us, *it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.* 2 Pet. ii. 21. compared with Heb. vi. 4. and ch. x. 26—31. Besides it would be wisest, and safest, and best for their parents and ministers themselves, not only because God hath no where required it, and consequently no law of his can be broken ; but also because they would not be in quite so much danger of having *a terrible account to render before God* for this, as the doctor fears they will for their education.

But to proceed : the doctor in many parts of those answers, as well as in the following words, seems not only to contradict himself, but the common principles of his party also ; and has given us a most substantial reason, why neither baptism, nor any thing else instead of it, should ever be administered to infants, because he says,
 ‘ It will by no means follow from hence, that this rite
 ‘ affects the eternal state of the child ; or that, if it did
 ‘ affect it, there must be such an extraordinary communi-
 ‘ cation of the spirit to it, as you suppose. You allow,

‘ in

‘ in exprefs terms, that there is no act of the child at all;
 ‘ and that it believes nothing. How this confifts with its
 ‘ having a perfect faith wrought in its mind at once, is not
 ‘ poffible for me to conceive.’ The purport of this third
 letter, and the manner, in which thofe sentences are intro-
 duced, feems to evince, that the doctor allows the negatives;
 and therefore I fhall be glad to know for what ends, and
 upon what grounds, he would pretend to baptize a child.
 It cannot be to *confer grace*, or thereby to infufe that *pure-
 nefs and perfection*, with which the kirk of *Seotland* ima-
 gines a child is *clad in baptism*, for this *fudden and irrefift-
 able* agency of the fpirit,⁸ ‘ by which the moft finifhed
 ‘ conviction *becomes* theirs;’ as ‘ by the baptifmal cere-
 ‘ mony they commence true believers at once, and are
 ‘ made heirs of heaven, and millions actually faved upon
 ‘ the ftrength of the mere ceremony;’ and what elfe this
 infidel writer fays about the fpirit’s agency, the doctor
 warmly oppofes, and calls⁹ ‘ a fcheme *fo* apparently con-
 ‘ trary to fact; and in theory fo wild [*as no man can eafily*]
 ‘ believe, it could be ferioufly propofed by any *man*, who
 ‘ enjoyed the ufe of his reafon: or that [*his author*] meant
 ‘ any thing by it, unlefs it were to expofe Chriftianity.’
 And he confidently afferts, that *the fcripture teaches*
nothing of this kind; and is *extremely forry that any form*
of baptism in the chriftian world, juftifies fuch inferences,
and fuch a manner of fpeaking. It cannot be, becaufe the
 child is a *believer*, and *federally holy*, as it derives faith
 from its parents; becaufe, as he pleads and urgeth the In-
 fidel’s own words, he feems alfo with him to allow, *that it*
believes nothing; or if he thinks it does, I am fure he can
 give no proof of it. It cannot be to deliver the infant
 from eternal damnation, becaufe he fays, *This rite will by*
no means affect the eternal ftate of the child. But he muft
 know, that thefe have been fome of the common pre-
 tences of his party, who have often afferted, that *infants*
dying unbaptized are damned, that there are fuch in hell a
fpaw long: and that God cuts them off, as men deftroy young
foxes; becaufe from their ravenous nature, they are affured
that they will become hurtful, if fuffered to grow up. Such
 horrid things as thefe have been urged by fome, and
 have appeared in print formerly; but I believe the mini-
 fters of his denomination, as well as others, are grown more
 moderate

⁸ *Chriftianity not founded, &c.* p. 9. and 69. ⁹ Second Let-
 ter, p. 49.

moderate now: tho' time was, when they would not rantize a child, whose father or mother, or both, were not in their communion; because in such a case they thought the infant could not have faith. But I know a certain minister of theirs, who hath boasted that *he was very charitable towards little infants, because he would not refuse to baptize a child; if there was in it but the faith of the great grandfather, or if the great grandfather of it was but a believer*, as he chose to express himself to two ministers of our persuasion, who have diverted themselves enough with the folly of it. How all these things are consistent with *a child's being regenerated, and clad with pureness and perfection in baptism, and having a perfect faith wrought in its mind at once*; or what proof can be given, that there is the least truth in any of these wild fancies, is beyond my ability to conceive; and I think the doctor had too much reason to add, 'I must therefore conclude, that you meant nothing more than to expose this practice, as you elsewhere expose persecution, by intimating that it cannot be defended, unless your doctrine were to be granted; whence you are sure, every thinking man, who yields to this part of your argument, will conclude, that it cannot be defended at all.'

Such expressions as these, as well as the following passage, might have been becomingly applied and made use of by one of our persuasion; but neither this, nor the following passage can appear with a very good grace from the doctor, or any of his party, where he says, 'There are many other particulars in your letter, about which I shall have no controversy with you at all, but shall willingly leave those deities to plead, whose altars you have cast down. The imputation of the faith of sureties to the baptized infant; the necessary connection between the administration of that rite, and the communication of some extraordinary influences of the spirit:' [*to which I may justly add the whole of that unscriptural practice*] '... I confess you have rallied with a just severity. And I am particularly pleased with the serious air with which the raillery on these heads is carried, even to the defence of fire and faggot in the cause of religion; from which I presume, Sir, you apprehend yourself to be in no danger.' But to return:

On the other hand, says the doctor, 'It seems sufficient for me here to have shewn, that your notion is not connected

‘ connected with Christianity, even allowing infant-baptism to be a part of it.’ And on this hand, it seems sufficient for me to have shewn, as, I think, I have clearly enough done in my supplement, to which I refer my readers; where they will find from a view of all the passages of scripture, which relate to Christ’s own institution, that infant-baptism is a mere human invention, no way *connected with Christianity*; and that none, who strictly adhere to scripture, as the rule of truth, can ever allow it *to be a part of it*. And I join most heartily with the doctor in that fervent wish, with which he concludes his answer to this objection; ‘ May the time at length come, when a zeal for the honour of the gospel shall more effectually engage all its ministers, to adhere to the purity both of its doctrines and institutions, and not to overload it with those additions of their own, which furnish its adversaries with matter of triumph! In the mean time, may those adversaries [*and all Pædobaptists of every denomination*] consider, that they are answerable to God for the impartiality, with which they enquire into the contents of Christianity, and that they are to take their notions of it from the New Testament alone! which if you, Sir, had been pleased to have done, you would never have mentioned this argument; nor from any thing you could have met with there, could you ever have thought of it.’

Since therefore the scripture is so great a stranger to infant-baptism, that those, who *take their notions of Christianity from the New Testament alone, could never have thought of it, nor would ever have mentioned such arguments* about it; why does not Dr. Doddridge, who is so much esteemed amongst the independent Pædobaptists, and with whom he has so great an influence, in his zeal for the honour of the gospel, imploy his parts and abilities, and exert the utmost of his endeavours, more effectually to engage all his fellow ministers, and their respective congregations, *more strictly to adhere to the purity both of its doctrines and institutions; and not to overload it with those additions of their own, which furnish its adversaries with matter of triumph?*

Having thus gone through his whole answer to this objection, I shall take my leave of him with recommending a few more passages of his, which, if duly attended to, may be very useful to promote those great and desirable ends.

‘ Reasonably

2 ‘ Reasonably we may desire, that God would awaken
 ‘ our minds to diligence in searching after truth ; that he
 ‘ would present the evidence of it before us in a clear and
 ‘ convincing light ; that he would guard our hearts from
 ‘ those corrupt prejudices which might obstruct its en-
 ‘ trance into them ; and that he would remind us, from
 ‘ time to time, of those great religious truths which we
 ‘ do believe, with such spirit and energy, that our tem-
 ‘ per of life may, in a suitable manner, be influenced by
 ‘ the realizing persuasion. In such a prayer, methinks,
 ‘ every virtuous Deist must join ; as I firmly believe, that
 ‘ would men heartily join in it, and act accordingly, they
 ‘ would soon cease to be deists in the negative sense of the
 ‘ word. And in proportion to the degree in which we
 ‘ see evident reason to believe the truth of Christianity,
 ‘ we may reasonably pray, that God, by the influences
 ‘ of his holy spirit on our minds, would give us more
 ‘ comprehensive views of its evidence, and would im-
 ‘ press a more lively sense of its great principles on our
 ‘ hearts ; that our faith may not be a cold assent, but
 ‘ powerful in the production of its genuine fruits.’

3 ‘ For I can think of nothing so rational, as diligently to
 ‘ examine the credentials of any thing offered us as a
 ‘ message from God, and then humbly to submit to it
 ‘ without cavilling and disputing, when we are satisfied
 ‘ that it wears the stamp of his authority.’ 4 ‘ We
 ‘ are therefore humbly and quietly to sit down, as it
 ‘ were, at the feet of the divine teacher ; and though
 ‘ several plausible objections may arise in our minds, and
 ‘ many things taught may be inconsistent with our pre-
 ‘ conceived prejudices, and with what through their in-
 ‘ fluence we should have expected, we are to suffer
 ‘ those prejudices to be over-ruled by so high an authority,
 ‘ and to acquiesce in this, that the Lord hath said it :
 ‘ And this is as really our duty, when he is speaking to
 ‘ us by his Messengers, as it was theirs when he was speak-
 ‘ ing immediately to them.’

5 ‘ I am sensible, Sir, the grand objection against all
 ‘ these reasonings [*in the light I have placed them*] is taken,
 ‘ from the appearance of a virtuous and amiable disposi-
 ‘ tion in some who disbelieve the [*necessity of obeying this*
 ‘ *institution of the*] gospel, and from the possibility that a
 K ‘ wrong

2 Third Letter, p. 53. 3 Ibid p. 46. 4 Third Letter, p. 45.
 5 Second Letter, p. 42.

' wrong association of ideas in others, leading them to
 ' conclude those things to be contained in the christian
 ' revelation, which do not indeed belong to it, may engage
 ' some to reject the whole from the apparent absurdity
 ' which they see in these spurious, tho' solemn, additions
 ' to it; as for instance, in those vast tracts of land, in
 ' which transubstantiation and image-worship [*and I may*
 ' *also add infant-sprinkling*] are represented, not merely
 ' as consistent with Christianity, but as in a manner es-
 ' sential to it, by those who are its established teachers,
 ' and may therefore be presumed best to understand it.'

' But this ignorance of the particular manner [*how*
 ' *and to whom baptism is to be applied*] does not, as one
 ' would imagine some apprehended, leave men at liberty
 ' to assert, at random, whatever they please about it.
 ' We may reasonably conclude, that it is not the stated
 ' office of the divine spirit to reveal new doctrines, which
 ' the scripture does not teach; for if it were, God would
 ' undoubtedly, as when he formerly added to prior reve-
 ' lations given to his church, furnish the persons to whom
 ' such discoveries were made, with proper credentials to
 ' authorise their report: and if this cannot be proved,
 ' it ought not to be asserted. Nor can we imagine it his
 ' office, to reveal, by an immediate suggestion, the doc-
 ' trines already delivered in scripture, to those who may
 ' have daily opportunities of learning them from thence.'

' Nay, I apprehend, it must follow from these princi-
 ' ples, that the very supposition of a revelation in gene-
 ' ral implies, on the one hand, sufficiency of evidence to
 ' every candid enquirer; and on the other, certain di-
 ' vine displeasure against the rejecters of it.' &c. ⁸ ' And
 ' [*therefore*] I shall remit you to a repeated perusal of that
 ' solid and useful [*book, The Holy Bible*] with only this one
 ' further question; "Whether you do not think there is
 ' " such a thing in the human heart, as the counter-part of
 ' " the character you deride, an impious propensity to the
 ' " negative, a soliciting the dissent of our own minds,
 ' " and an endeavouring to promote our own unbelief?"
 ' If you think, the will has no remote influence upon the
 ' understanding as to its enquiry into truth, and that cor-
 ' rupt affections never lead a man into error, from which
 ' (had his heart been more upright,) he might easily have
 ' been

⁶ Third Letter, p. 20. ⁷ Second Letter, p. 36. ⁸ Third
 Letter, p. 59.

‘ been preserved, you contradict not only yourself, but
 ‘ the common sense and experience of mankind; and
 ‘ introduce an universal fatality, that worst of monsters,
 ‘ which will swallow up virtue and religion together, and
 ‘ leave the mind an easy prey to every error, and to every
 ‘ vice, which will owe its cheap victory to the air of ir-
 ‘ resistibility, with which it makes its appearance.’

S E C T. VI.

Remarks on Dr. Leland's Letters.

TH O’ I had intirely finished my design in these re-
 marks sometime, before I had the pleasure of read-
 ing Dr. Leland’s two letters, in answer to *Christianity not
 founded on Argument*; yet I thought myself obliged to join
 him with his brethren, that I might make good my title
 of *Remarks on the several Answers, &c.* because those words
 may be thought to include the doctor’s letters, as well as
 others. For brevity sake, I shall omit many extracts,
 which might be urged with some force; and confine my-
 self chiefly to the reply, which he makes to his author’s
 objection concerning infant-baptism, avoiding, as much
 as possible, to repeat what I have already urged in answer
 to Mr. Mole.

In the summary account, which the doctor gives of this
 writer’s Pamphlet, are these words. 9 ‘ He represents a
 ‘ rational faith, that is, as he himself explains it, an
 ‘ assent to revealed truths founded upon the convic-
 ‘ tion of the understanding, as a false and unwarrantable
 ‘ notion. And therefore sets himself to prove, that in
 ‘ the gospel no appeal to the understanding was ever
 ‘ made or intended. He talks as if infants were capable
 ‘ of faith, before they are capable of exerting one act of
 ‘ reason; and that the infant’s belief answers as effectual-
 ‘ ly all the demands of the gospel, as that of the first
 ‘ proficient, and highest graduate in divinity. And as he
 ‘ explains the first beginning of truth to be without rea-
 ‘ son, or any use of the understanding, so he represents
 ‘ the perseverance in the faith required in the gospel, to

K 2

‘ be

9 First Letter, p. 9.

‘ be a blind and foolish obstinacy to a present notion, a dis-
 ‘ avowing all future use of reason for our security. . . . He
 ‘ declares, that that person *best enjoys the true and genuine*
 ‘ *faith, who never asked himself one single question about it,*
 ‘ *and never dealt at all in the evidence of reason. . . .* And
 ‘ tho’ he observes, that we are *ordered to be taught the*
 ‘ *faith in our childhood,* yet he expressly affirms, that faith
 ‘ and religion *can never be a thing that is to be taught,* and
 ‘ that it *must needs be something that does not require time to*
 ‘ *attain.*’ ¹ That the christian faith cannot be a rational
 ‘ thing, [*because*] that we are *ordered to be baptized into*
 ‘ *it.* This he represents as *the known original of faith, the*
 ‘ *great root whence all our religious impressions notoriously*
 ‘ *spring,* and that, *by the baptismal ceremony,* men com-
 ‘ mence true believers *at once:* And this, even *whilst they*
 ‘ *have not the least share or symptom of understanding.* He
 ‘ seems to lay great stress upon this, and returns to it in
 ‘ several parts of his pamphlet.’

This, I think, is all, except one line, that the doctor
 hath any where cited from this author’s objection about
 infant-baptism; whether because it appeared to him too
 difficult to answer it, and vindicate the practice therein
 exposed, or from an unwillingness in express terms to give
 it up and disavow it, I shall not pretend to say. For, as to
 what he says about the education of children, I take that
 to be no plea at all for infant-baptism; since the children
 of those, who oppose that practice, may have the same
 advantage of a christian education. Besides which, they
 are in no danger of having their minds prejudiced against
 the truth by such human traditions, to which the others
 are exposed, and is the true reason, why many sincere per-
 sons are kept from yielding a personal and voluntary obe-
 dience to Christ in his own appointed way. However,
 this is sufficient to shew, that if the practice of our Pædo-
 baptist brethren be not a stumbling block in the way of
 Infidels; yet it certainly gives them a very great handle
 to expose, and is now made the occasion of their *sneering*
 at and deriding, Christianity, as if infant-sprinkling was
 really a part of it, and contained in the New Testament:
 tho’ as the doctor expresses himself,

‘ Nothing can be more contrary to plain and undeni-
 ‘ able fact, more contradictory in all its parts, and more
 ‘ evidently subversive of itself, than the scheme here ad-
 ‘ vanced

¹ Ibid. p. 28. ² Second Letter, p. 55.

vanced by this writer. I am sensible this Gentleman will be ready to sneer at the charge. For undoubtedly he does not intend that the world should look upon it as a thing which he himself believes. It is the true scriptural and revealed account of the matter, and the scripture alone must answer for it. And therefore the more contradictions are proved upon this scheme, the better it will answer his design, which is to expose Christianity to the derision and contempt of mankind.' And elsewhere,

3 ' I do not think there can be a more complete scheme of absurdity and enthusiasm, than what this Gentleman here puts upon us for the true scripture account of faith, and of the spirit, and of the nature of gospel-evidence; which he undoubtedly intends for exposing the sacred writings.' 4 ' But if it be made appear, that this is all gross misrepresentation; that the account he is pleased to give us [*of baptism*] is as contrary to scripture, as it is to reason and common sense, then the contradictions and absurdities are to be charged upon the author himself,' [*or upon those churches, whose corrupt practices furnish him with so just an occasion for it, and they are*] ' justly accountable for them. And this attempt of his must only pass for a proof of his readiness to take any methods, how unfair and disingenuous soever, to expose the religion of Jesus.'

The doctor's reply to all his objection on the head of baptism, tho' not in direct and express words, is yet, in my judgment, a clear and manifest giving up their practice in this particular, as an unscriptural thing; for he says,

5 ' The strength of his argument here depends upon the sneering account he gives of the nature of baptism. But there needs no more to show the weakness and fallacy of it, than to state the case of baptism according to the gospel notion of it; in which alone Christianity is concerned. At the first founding of the christian church, the first work was to bring persons over to the faith of the gospel, by setting before them the evidence whereby it was confirmed; and then, when they were once converted to the faith, they were, according to the divine appointment, to be baptized, which was a
' solemn

3 First Letter, p. 14.
Letter, p. 29

4 Second Letter, p. 55.

5 First

‘ solemn taking upon them a profession of the christian religion, and a bringing themselves under the most sacred obligations to obey its laws. And there is nothing in this, but what is perfectly consistent with faith’s being founded upon good and rational evidence ; nor can so much as a shadow of an argument be brought from it to prove, that because persons were ordered to be baptized after they believed, therefore they did not, or could not, use their reason or intellectual faculty to lead them into that belief.’

All this is every way agreeable to the practice of the Baptist churches at this day, but is not consistent with Pædobaptism. For this true *stating the case of baptism according to the gospel notion of it, in which alone the doctor affirms Christianity is concerned*, is an absolute exclusion of every other way of proceeding in relation to that ordinance, as no part of Christianity : so that infant-sprinkling, by the doctor’s confession, must be an unchristian practice, because according to what he here gives us as *the gospel notion of baptism*, there cannot *so much as a shadow of an argument be brought from thence to prove it*. And therefore I heartily wish, that our established church, and that of *Scotland*, may be herein reformed ; and settled upon this true scripture plan according to the divine appointment, and thereby become proof against the attacks of Infidels.

But if the assertion of the kirk of *Scotland*, that *the use of understanding, and faith, is not requisite in all those that receive this sacrament* ; or if the last clause of the xxvii article of the church of *England* were true, that *the baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ* : surely the doctor might have proved it from Christ’s institution, and not have been forced to make use only of mere human suppositions, instead of plain scripture, for the vindication of his practice, and the best support of his own cause, as he does in what follows. ‘ Our author is
 ‘ sensible of this, and therefore he lays the stress of his
 ‘ argument upon the baptism of infants, which he re-
 ‘ presents in his own way. Let us therefore argue with
 ‘ him upon the SUPPOSITION, that it was the will of
 ‘ God, that not only adult persons, who themselves em-
 ‘ braced the christian faith, but that their children too
 ‘ should be baptized.’

Had

Had this been the will of God, certainly we should have met with it in his holy word; because the apostles did not shun to declare unto his church *all the counsel of God, and kept back nothing that was profitable unto them.* Acts xx. 20, 27. Besides, the order of the kirk of *Scotland* affirms, that ‘ baptism, and the holy supper of the Lord Jesus are then rightly ministred. . . . when further to them is nothing added, from them nothing diminished, and in their practice nothing changed besides the institution of the Lord Jesus, and practice of his holy apostles. . . . And *that* such, as would presume to alter Christ’s perfect ordinance, ought severely to be punished.’ and the xiv article of our established church says expressly, that ‘ Voluntary works, besides, over and above God’s commandments . . . cannot be taught without arrogancy and impiety :’ both which may be understood, as a severe censure of the doctrine, and practice of infant-baptism, as well as of other things not commanded in scripture.

However the doctor proceeds thus : ‘ And I cannot see how it follows from this, that therefore faith is not a rational thing. For as to adult persons, their being commanded to be baptized upon their believing does not in the least prove that they did not embrace the christian faith upon a rational conviction.’ Had the churches of *England* and *Scotland* restrained baptism to *adult persons* only, their ministers would never have been thus pressed by such objections; nor could infidels ever have suggested, as this writer has done, that their members *did not embrace the christian faith upon a rational conviction*: because *their being commanded to be baptized upon their believing* necessarily implies *a rational conviction*; which the doctor is here compelled to own, that infants have not, when he adds. ‘ And as to infants, they have no faith at all; nor does their being baptized suppose they have any. All that it supposes, is not that they do themselves believe, but that they are the children of believers; and are by that sacred rite entered into the visible society of Christians, solemnly dedicated to God, and commended to his grace and blessing by such as do themselves believe; and who solemnly undertake to see that they be carefully instructed in the principles of the christian faith, when they come to years capable of it, and that they be trained up to a holy and a virtuous practice.’

But

But must we account infants members of Christ's visible church, before they are believers? Of what use or credit can they, as such, be to any church? And from what authority could the doctor imbibe these scriptureless notions, but from the kirk of *Scotland*, and the *English* directory? The kirk, in her form of baptism, says, 'Neither
' is it requisite, that all those that receive this sacrament,
' have the use of understanding and faith;' and the directory says, that 'such children by baptism are solemn-
' ly received into the bosom of the visible church; that
' they are Christians, and federally holy before baptism,
' and therefore are they baptized.' See my remarks hereon, p. 33, 35. From these last words one would have imagined, that our *English* Presbyterians believed, that infants have faith; tho' I find the doctor does not understand them so, and yet seems implicitly to receive what goes before. But is it at all becoming a Protestant, or in the least worthy of a wise and learned minister, to rest upon such authorities as these? I am sure the authority of our established church is equally as good; and in her catechism baptism is said to signify *an inward and spiritual grace in the person baptized, together with a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness, as the fruits of repentance whereby they forsake sin; and of faith whereby they stedfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that sacrament.* And her xxvii article says, 'Baptism is not
' only a sign of profession, but it is also a sign of
' regeneration, or new birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into
' the church: the promises of the forgiveness of sin,
' and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy
' Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed: faith is confirmed,
' and grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God.' And therefore the questions are asked, and the answers made in the infant's name. The prayers are put up for the infant in express words, and the minister says, *that the child is regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ's church.*

These things are abundantly more, than what the doctor says is all that the baptism of infants supposes; in which he widely differs from our established church, whose sentiments are so entirely contrary to his assertion, that she supposes infants to be regenerated, that they have faith, and make profession of it likewise; tho' indeed it is made after a very strange manner, and without the least evidence of faith.

faith. But if the scriptures had been strictly attended to, and made by them the sole rule and ground of proceeding, the kirk of *Scotland* would never have denied the one, nor our established church have practised the other. But to return :

The doctor proceeds thus : ‘ So among the *Jews*, no
 ‘ adult person was allowed to be circumcised, without
 ‘ professing his belief and adherence to the law of *Moses* ;
 ‘ and his being circumcised, was to be regarded as an open
 ‘ declaration of it. This was no proof at all, that he
 ‘ did not embrace that law upon a rational conviction, but
 ‘ rather supposed that he did so. But when he was him-
 ‘ self circumcised and openly professed that law, his
 ‘ children, if he had any, were to be circumcised too ;’
*[by the express appointment of God the doctor might have said :
 and as no such command can be produced for infant-baptism,
 his parallel is quite destroyed in the most essential part of it.
 And because the command of God for the circumcision of
 infants]* ‘ was not understood as a declaration that they
 ‘ also believed, of which they were not yet capable ;’ so no
 moral qualifications were required, nor is it any where
 said, that they were dedicated to God by it ; but, on the
 contrary, in the institution of circumcision, *Gen. xvii. 11.*
 it is only declared to be for a perpetual, or *everlasting token*
of the covenant then made betwixt God and Abraham, to be
 fulfilled in the family of *Isaac* then unborn. And when
 God commanded them by *Moses*, *Exodus xiii. 2. 11—16.*
 to *dedicate* or *sanctify* all their first-born unto him, as a
 constant *token* and memorial of their deliverance from the
 last plague, for their sakes, inflicted upon the *Egyptians* ;
 it was neither to be done by circumcision, nor at the
 time when the child was circumcised, but at the end of
 the time appointed for the mother’s purification ; which was
 thirty three days after for a male, and eighty days after the
 birth of a female. See *Levit. xii.* And in conformity to those
 laws, with respect to our blessed Saviour and his Virgin
 Mother, we read *Luke ii. 21—24.* *And when eight days*
were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name
was called Jesus. And when the days of her purifica-
tion according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they
brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord, (as it
is written in the law of the Lord, every male that openeth
the womb shall be called holy to the Lord) and to offer a sacri-
fice, &c. ‘ But *[here is not one syllable of the doctor’s no-*
tion] ‘ that they were dedicated to God’ *[by circumcision,*
tho’ to be sure they were looked upon] ‘ as the children of

L

‘ his

‘ his professed people, and to be trained as they grew up,
 ‘ in the belief and acknowledgment of the living and
 ‘ true God, and the practice of his law. The doctor
 proceeds :

‘ And SUPPOSING it was the will of God,’ [*this need
 not have been SUPPOSED, nor ought it to be admitted with-
 out the like command in scripture*] ‘ that in like manner in
 ‘ the christian church not only adult persons, who them-
 ‘ selves believed, but the children of such should be bap-
 ‘ tized ; all that could be justly concluded from it would
 ‘ be, not that the christian faith is not a reasonable thing,
 ‘ but that the God of truth and purity well knew the doc-
 ‘ trines of Christianity to be highly important, and agree-
 ‘ able to truth and reason ; and therefore would have
 ‘ children betimes instructed in those doctrines ; and that
 ‘ he knew the duties there prescribed to be of great con-
 ‘ sequence to our happiness, and therefore would have
 ‘ children early trained up to the knowledge and practice
 ‘ of those duties. And this’ [*is done among the Baptists,
 who never pretend to bring their infants to baptism, because
 they have no command from God to do so. And yet their
 children are under full as high, and as strong an obligation
 to regard such instructions without what the doctor says*]
 ‘ does not hinder, but rather obliges the person, who was
 ‘ thus early baptized, to consider those sacred truths when
 ‘ he grows up ; and then he is not to believe them be-
 ‘ cause he was taught them in his childhood, but because
 ‘ he himself considers the evidence brought for them,
 ‘ and finds it reasonable and convincing ; and in like
 ‘ manner, it does not hinder him from examining into
 ‘ the nature and importance of the duties required of
 ‘ him, but rather obliges him to do so, that he may per-
 ‘ form those duties from a full conviction of their rea-
 ‘ sonableness and excellency.’ This we think the best
 qualification, and the fittest time, for their being baptized ;
 not only as they are thereby more worthy subjects of it,
 but also as more glory must redound to God and Christ,
 and much more satisfaction, comfort, and joy, to their
 own souls, in the answer of a good conscience : and to the
 church of Christ also, in not departing from the divine
 rule, than can possibly arise from the contrary practice of
 our Pædobaptist brethren in sprinkling their infants. And
 in this view, the doctor might very consistently have
 proceeded thus. ‘ To his question therefore, Can a man be
 ‘ baptized into a rational religion? I answer yes. A man that
 ‘ is convinced of the truth of such a religion, and believes it
 upon

‘ upon good evidence, may be reasonably baptized into it :
 ‘ *i.e.* he may solemnly, by that outward sacred rite, profess
 ‘ his belief of that religion, and oblige himself to the
 ‘ duties it prescribes ; which is the design of baptism with
 ‘ regard to the adult. And’ [*the doctor can never prove
 from scripture, that it was designed for any others, not-
 withstanding he says*] ‘ with regard to infants, it may be
 ‘ very reasonable for a man that himself believes it upon
 ‘ rational grounds, to baptize his child, *i. e.* solemnly
 ‘ by that sacred rite to devote his child to God,’ [*when
 God commands it indeed, but not before, and yet neverthe-
 less it is his duty to teach*] ‘ and to bring him, as far as in
 ‘ him lies, under engagements to embrace and practise
 ‘ that excellent religion, as soon as he is capable of doing
 ‘ so ; at the same time solemnly obliging himself’ [*or to
 think himself already obliged*] ‘ to take care that the child
 ‘ be betimes seasoned with the knowledge of sacred impor-
 ‘ tant truth, and formed to the practice of piety and vir-
 ‘ tue. And there is nothing improper, in supposing that
 ‘ it is the will and appointment of God, that children
 ‘ should betimes be brought under such engagements, when
 ‘ he knows them to be in themselves fit and reasonable,
 ‘ and of such a nature, that it will be their duty and their
 ‘ great advantage, when they come to years of discreffion,
 ‘ personally to approve and to fulfil them. If this be lay-
 ‘ ing prejudices and prepossessions in their way, it is pre-
 ‘ possessing them in favour of truth and virtue : and it is
 ‘ every way agreeable to the divine wisdom and goodness,
 ‘ to lay them under such a prepossession, and what the au-
 ‘ thor of our beings has a right to do. And therefore his
 ‘ doing that, can never be justly brought as an objection
 ‘ against the reasonableness of a revelation.’ And for the
 doing of all this, there is not the least occasion to sprinkle
 them, and falsely term it baptism ; by which multitudes
 are kept from a rational obedience to that sacred institu-
 tion of Christ Jesus.

I have here transcribed all the answer, which doctor
Leland hath any where given to this Infidel’s objection
 against the christian religion, from the practice of infant-
 baptism, in favour of which he is so far from alledging one
 single text of scripture, that, on the contrary, he himself
 seems to found it wholly upon mere human suppositions :
 which therefore, in the judgment of the church of *England*,
 is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed
 as an article of faith, or be thought necessary or requisite

to salvation. And how the practice thereof can be justified, or defended by those, who heartily and sincerely believe the vi article of our established church, is not very easy to discern; for her vi article says expressly, that ‘ Holy scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation, &c.’

This truly protestant article is what one of her ministers publicly declared to be *the glory of the church of England*, and then he heartily wished, *that no other article had ever been made*. And I as heartily wish, that our established church, and the kirk of *Scotland* also, were thus reformed, and constituted upon this foundation only; for then the Baptist churches would have no occasion to dispute with, or separate from, them. But we might then hold the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace together. And, as Dr. *Leland* expresses himself, ‘ When once people are made sensible of the tendency of such a scheme, it is to be hoped, that it will in a great measure prove an antidote to the poison of [*infidelity*] and that piety and good sense is not so far lost in the world, that men will lightly suffer themselves to be bantered out of their religion and reason too. Such attempts, one would be apt to think, should, with persons that will allow themselves time for reflection, turn to the advantage of Christianity.’⁶

S E C T. VII.

Remarks on Mr. Benson's Dialogue, intitled, The Reasonableness of the Christian Religion.

IRESERVED Mr. *Benson's* answer to this infidel's objection, concerning infant-baptism, to be last considered, because it is so very full, that he hath almost prevented my making any remarks upon it; and his frank, open concessions have given me a suitable opportunity freely to expostulate with him, and his brethren, upon their unscriptural practice of infant-sprinkling; which for a long

⁶ First Letter, p. 6.

long time has furnished Papists with a considerable advantage in their disputes with Protestants, and has now given Infidels an occasion to ridicule our holy religion. To which Mr. *Benson* replies, p. 95, 96.

‘ The objection was founded on a mistaken notion of baptism; and therefore had no force in it. Your author, *Pyrrho*, knows very well that some Christians deny infant-baptism; and he had much better have done so, than have given up his understanding, and rational Christianity, all at once.’

The objection of this unbeliever against infant-baptism is plainly founded on that notion of it, which is contained in the forms and catechism of the church of *England*; and this Mr. *Benson* is pleased to call a *mistaken notion of baptism*. He might have said with equal truth, that infant-baptism in general, as well as the practice of it in our established church, is *founded on a mistaken notion*. For how can it be otherwise, if it has no foundation in the word of God, as he manifestly allows, when he says; this author had *much better have denied* and given it up, *than have given up his understanding and rational Christianity*? For if he did not acknowledge this, but was really persuaded, that there is scripture authority for it, he would not have advised his author to give it up, but only to correct his *mistaken notions* about it. And if this be the case, if there is no scripture for it, if the consequence of admitting infant-baptism be to any man the occasion of *giving up his understanding and rational Christianity*, as Mr. *Benson*’s words seem plainly to imply; why does he not openly renounce the practice, and no longer countenance it in his people, and build them up in any mistaken notion of baptism?

After this he proceeds to give us some hints, and some account of the various pretences, opinions, customs, and forms made use of by Presbyterians, Independents, and others, as well as our established church, as follows: ‘ But others, who are for infant-baptism, do not suppose any faith to be required in a child: tho’ they would require it in a Jew, Heathen or Mahometan, upon their coming over to Christianity in riper years. The same ceremony may answer different ends upon different subjects, or in the case of different persons. Those in general, whom *John* baptized, confessed their sins, and were baptized, as penitents, for the remission of sins. And yet our Saviour, who had no sin to confess, nor any need for
‘ repentance,

‘ repentance, was baptized by *John*; I suppose, to initiate him into his office, as the great *Messiah*. The
 ‘ circumcision of *Abraham* was to him, who was a believer, the seal of the righteousness of that faith, which
 ‘ he had before he was circumcised. But could not be
 ‘ the seal of faith unto infants at eight days old, to whom
 ‘ it was nevertheless commanded to be administered,
 ‘ merely as the initiating ceremony. Many Christians argue in like manner, about christian baptism, and suppose that it may signify some things, when applied to
 ‘ the adult, different from what it can signify, when applied to infants. To the last they look upon it as a
 ‘ mere initiating ceremony, by which a christian parent, or sponsor, engages in a solemn manner to train up that
 ‘ child in what he apprehends to be a rational religion. By that external rite such a child is entered into the
 ‘ school of Christ, to be trained up in his religion; that
 ‘ he may learn the nature and evidence of it, as his understanding opens, and be taught to live in all that purity
 ‘ which the outward washing with water denotes, and which Christianity requires. There are some, who represent baptism as absolutely necessary to salvation;
 ‘ who speak of persons as actually saved, upon the strength of the mere ceremony; who make children commence
 ‘ believers upon the imputed faith of their bondsmen, or sureties; and make the sponsor say, *I believe*, and *it is my desire to be baptized*; when he hath no design to be
 ‘ baptized himself, but hath actually been baptized many years before; who pretend to baptize not with water only, but also with the *Holy Ghost*; or to connect
 ‘ with baptism the conferring of grace, or of the *Holy Spirit*; as was actually done, after baptism, by the
 ‘ *Apostles*; but which no other persons since have had the power of doing.’

In all this, only these twelve words, *I suppose, to initiate him into his office, as the great Messiah*, can with certainty be taken as Mr. *Benson*’s own judgment and persuasion: and therefore, whether he has here given us his own notion of infant-baptism, I know not; but this is manifest, he does not mention any one notion of it as agreeable to scripture, nor pretend to bring any proof for that practice from thence. He is so far from attempting this, that he freely condemns most, if not all the notions, which some churches have had concerning baptism, together with their forms of administration, as unscriptural, in the

the following words, ' But as to those who hold such
 ' opinions, and make use of such forms' [*namely the opinions
 and forms abovementioned*] ' let them answer for them.
 ' Such things do not appear to me to be according to the
 ' pleasure and ordinance of God himself in this point.
 ' All I can do is, out of a sincere concern for Christi-
 ' anity itself, most humbly to breathe out my wishes and
 ' ardent prayers, that such stumbling-blocks may be taken
 ' out of the way; and that all parties of Christians
 ' would endeavour to cut off occasion from those who are
 ' perpetually seeking occasion to blaspheme that holy
 ' name, by the which we are called!' [*in the number of
 which occasions he allows, that infant-baptism is one, and
 therefore he adds*] ' However, the New Testament itself is
 ' a stranger to any such sentiments, or practices; and
 ' therefore Christianity is not, in the least, affected by this
 ' objection.'

I freely subscribe to what Mr. *Benson* here says, when
 he pronounces those notions and forms, made use of in
 infant-baptism, no part of *Christianity*; or that *objections*
 against it, founded on that practice, are what real *Christi-*
anity is not in the least affected by: because the New Testa-
ment itself is a stranger to any such sentiments or practices.
 But I must likewise observe that these questions were pro-
 perly asked, and the responses rightly made in the primi-
 tive times, when none were admitted to baptism, but
 those only, who had been first instructed in the know-
 ledge of Christianity, and made a personal profession of
 repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God.
Heb. vi. 1, 2. And I cannot but add, that some churches
 still retaining these ancient forms is a plain confession, that
 they have changed the proper subject, and is also a stand-
 ing proof of the antiquity of adult-baptism. And this
 appears very clearly from the liturgy in the apostolical con-
 stitutions, the most ancient now in being; and which, ac-
 cording to Mr. *Whiston*, ⁷ contains the true original
 baptismal creed, from whence that, which is commonly
 stiled the apostles creed, is only an abridgment. The
 office of baptism in them begins thus :

' Book VII. Sect. LXIII. Now after what manner
 ' those ought to live that are initiated into Christ, and
 ' what thanksgivings they ought to send up to God, thro'
 ' Christ, has been said in the foregoing directions: But
 ' it

⁷ *Essay on the Constitutions*, p. 215.

‘ it is reasonable not to leave even those who are not yet
 ‘ initiated without assistance.

‘ XXXIX. He therefore who is to be catechized in the
 ‘ word of piety, let him be instructed before his bap-
 ‘ tism in the knowledge of the unbegotten God, in the
 ‘ understanding of his only begotten Son, in the assured
 ‘ acknowledgment of the Holy Ghost: let him learn
 ‘ the order of the several parts of the creation, the series
 ‘ of providence, the different dispensations of the laws :
 ‘ let him be instructed why the world was made, and
 ‘ why man was appointed to be a citizen therein; let
 ‘ him also know his own nature, of what sort it is; let
 ‘ him be taught how God punished the wicked with wa-
 ‘ ter, and did glorify the saints in every generation, I
 ‘ mean *Seth*, and *Enoch*, and *Noah*, and *Abraham*, and
 ‘ his posterity, and *Melchisedeck*, and *Job*, and *Moses*,
 ‘ and *Joshua*, and *Caleb*, and *Phineas* the Priest, and
 ‘ those that were holy in every generation; and how
 ‘ God still took care of, and did not reject mankind, but
 ‘ called them from their error and vanity, to the ac-
 ‘ knowledgment of the truth at various seasons, reduc-
 ‘ ing them from bondage and impiety unto liberty and
 ‘ piety, from injustice to righteousness, from death eter-
 ‘ nal to everlasting life. Let him that offers himself to
 ‘ baptism, learn these and the like things in his catechiz-
 ‘ ing; and let him who lays his hands upon him adore
 ‘ God, the Lord of the whole world, and thank him for
 ‘ his creation, for his sending Christ, his only begotten
 ‘ Son, that he might save men, by blotting out his trans-
 ‘ gressions; that he might remit ungodliness, and sins,
 ‘ and might *purify him from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*,
 ‘ and sanctify man according to the good pleasure of his
 ‘ kindness, that he might inspire him with the knowledge
 ‘ of his will, and enlighten the eyes of his heart to con-
 ‘ sider of his wonderful works, and make known to him
 ‘ the judgments of righteousness; that so he might hate
 ‘ every way of iniquity, and walk in the way of truth;
 ‘ that he might be thought worthy of the laver of rege-
 ‘ nation, to the adoption of sons, which is in Christ,
 ‘ that *being planted together in the likeness of the death of*
 ‘ *Christ*, in hopes of a glorious communication, he may
 ‘ be mortified to sin, and may live to God, as to his
 ‘ mind, and word, and deed, and may be numbered toge-
 ‘ ther in the book of the living: and after this thanksgiv-
 ‘ ing

‘ ing, let him instruct him in the doctrines concerning
 ‘ our Lord’s incarnation, and in those concerning his
 ‘ passion, and resurrection from the dead, and assump-
 ‘ tion.

‘ XL. And when it remains that the catechumen is to
 ‘ be baptized, let him learn what concerns the renuncia-
 ‘ tion of the devil, and the joining himself with Christ :
 ‘ for it is fit that he should first abstain from things con-
 ‘ trary, and then be admitted to the mysteries ; he must
 ‘ before hand purify his heart from all wickedness of dis-
 ‘ position, from all spot and wrinkle, and then partake
 ‘ of the holy things : for as the skilfullest husbandman
 ‘ does first purge his ground of the thorns which are
 ‘ grown up therein, and does then sow his wheat, so
 ‘ ought you also to take away all impiety from them, and
 ‘ then to sow the seeds of piety in them, and vouchsafe
 ‘ them baptism. For even our Lord did in this manner
 ‘ exhort us saying, first *make disciples of all nations*, and
 ‘ then he adds this, and *baptize them into the name of the*
 ‘ *Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. Let
 ‘ therefore the candidate for baptism declare thus in his
 ‘ renunciation :

‘ XLI. I renounce *Satan*, and his works, and his pomps,
 ‘ and his worships, and his angels, and his inventions,
 ‘ and all things that are under him. And after his re-
 ‘ nunciation, let him in his association say, And I associate
 ‘ myself to Christ, and believe, and am baptized into
 ‘ one unbegotten being, the only true God, Almighty,
 ‘ the Father of Christ, the creator and maker of all
 ‘ things, from whom are all things ; and into the Lord
 ‘ Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, the first-born of the
 ‘ whole creation, who before the ages was begotten by the
 ‘ good pleasure of the father ; by whom all things were
 ‘ made, both those in heaven, and those on earth, visible
 ‘ and invisible, who in the last days descended from
 ‘ heaven, and took flesh, and was born of the holy Virgin
 ‘ Mary, and did converse holily, according to the laws of
 ‘ his God and father, and was crucified under *Pontius Pi-*
 ‘ *late*, and died for us, and rose again from the dead after
 ‘ his passion the third day, and ascended into the heavens,
 ‘ and sitteth at the right hand of the father, and again is
 ‘ to come at the end of the world with glory, to judge
 ‘ the quick and the dead, of whose kingdom there shall
 ‘ be no end. And I am baptized into the Holy Ghost,
 M ‘ that

‘ that is the comforter, who wrought in all the saints from
 ‘ the beginning of the world, but was afterwards sent to
 ‘ the apostles by the father, according to the promise of
 ‘ our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ; and after the
 ‘ apostles, to all those that believe in the holy catholic
 ‘ church. Into the resurrection of the flesh, and into
 ‘ the remission of sins, and into the kingdom of heaven,
 ‘ and into the life of the world to come.’

These rules justly deserve the most serious regard of every Christian. And, notwithstanding what Mr. *Benson* says, it is my humble opinion, that the surest way to remove these stumbling blocks is not to lay aside the ancient forms, but to restore primitive baptism, both as to the mode and subject. However, if the Baptist churches, or as Mr. *Benson* here expresses it, if pure and primitive *Christianity is not in the least affected by this objection*; yet I am sure Mr. *Benson* himself, with all his Pædobaptist brethren, even every denomination of Christians, except those who utterly disown and renounce infant-baptism, must be so greatly *affected by it*, that they can never defend pure and primitive Christianity, I don’t say with *the least*, but with that consistency, which it is necessary, and most to be wished, that they could. And is it not greatly to be lamented, that such excellent abilities, and such distinguishing endowments, as many of them possess, should be rendered ineffectual for the conviction and conversion of Papists and Infidels, by their practice of that unscriptural ceremony in any form whatsoever? For Mr. *Benson* affirms, ⁸ ‘ That, before men are capable of understanding, no faith can be required of them; any
 ‘ more than reason or virtue can be expected of infants,
 ‘ before they become moral agents.’ And of infants the *Oxford Reply* says; ⁹ ‘ They have no reason, nor are they
 ‘ therefore capable of religion.’ And we are assured by a much higher authority, that, *without faith it is impossible to please God*. Heb. xi. 6. But if instead of renouncing and giving up such things, ministers will on the contrary practise, as a solemn act of religion, ¹ What is no where *expressly revealed in the New Testament*, ² What *the New Testament itself is a stranger to*, ³ about which the
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⁸ Page 108. ⁹ Page 7. ¹ *Cambridge Letter*, p. 5. ² Mr. *Benson’s Dialogue*, p. 95. ³ Mr. *Mole’s Grounds*, p. 56.

christian religion, or the rational believers of it, have nothing further to do with than to disown and disavow them, because, ⁴ from any thing they could have met with there, they could never have thought of it. ⁵ If they believe in the perpetuity of baptism; that it was instituted as a means and assistance to preserve men stedfast in the practice of those moral duties, which are of eternal and unchangeable obligation; and that it was designed for the solemn admission of every member into the christian church, and thereby intitling him to all the privileges of being within the pale; such a plain significant rite, so free from all appearance of superstition and vanity, and so wisely fitted to the end for which it was designed, that no man can justly, or with any reason, object against it; and yet neither be baptized themselves, nor encourage and stir up the people, who are under their care to regard Christ's authority in this point; if on the contrary, they continue to administer infant-baptism, or some other thing instead of it, to infants, and build their people up in the belief and practice of what themselves do not believe ⁶ to be according to the pleasure and ordinance of God himself in that point; if they ⁷ most humbly breathe out their wishes and ardent prayers, that such stumbling blocks may be taken out of the way; and yet make no stand against them, nor exert one effort for removing them, what can we think? May we not justly ask them, how far such a conduct is consistent with sincerity, and with that regard to Christ's laws and authority, which as ministers of the gospel, they are bound, in duty and in conscience, uniformly to shew forth in the whole of their conversation and ministry; whether under these convictions they can answer such neglects at the awful bar of God in the great day of account; and whether Mr. Benson, with all his Pædobaptist brethren, ought not calmly and seriously to consider these things for their own and their peoples sakes; many of whom perhaps have been misled and hindered from obeying and glorifying Christ in this particular, as they might, and would otherwise have done? For as Mr. Benson expresses himself, ⁸ 'What interest is it of mine, that [my friend] Pyrrho should think and act right, but only that he is my friend, and that I sincerely wish well to him and to

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⁴ Dr. Doddridge's Third Letter, p. 57. ⁵ Mr. Benson's Dialogue, p. 25, 26. ⁶ Mr. Mole's Grounds, p. 57. ⁷ Mr. Benson's Dialogue, p. 95. ⁸ Ibid p. 63.

‘ all mankind ; and should rejoice to see all attend to evidence, honestly acknowledge it, when they are convinced ; and, in all respects, take the right method in thinking and acting.’

But if after all, they will still neglect this important point of Christianity, what will Papists and Infidels think, nay, what will they not say of them and their religion ? What greater advantage can they have, or desire to have against Christians and Protestants, than their allowing a practice, which they confess is unscriptural ? For as it is owned to be no part of the christian religion, those enemies of truth can easily discern their advantage, and know very well how to make a proper use of it. For which reason, I shall not be surprized to see them baffled both by Papists and Infidels, till they are thereby forced upon a reformation, which I should greatly rejoice to see.

But surely those churches, which have carried the reformation so far, as not to give the least handle to either, by an open neglect, or by making any unwarrantable alterations in Christ’s most solemn institutions, ought as carefully to avoid giving the most distant occasion for saying, That tho’ we are baptized ourselves, yet we countenance other Christians in an open neglect of Christ’s ordinance, by communicating with them at the Lord’s Table ; notwithstanding we know, and believe in our own consciences, they never were baptized according to Christ’s appointment. For this, perhaps, will be said to look too much like renouncing our own baptism, and may by Infidels be thought no less than a tacit acknowledgment, that tho’ we own Christ for the legislator of his church, yet there is not so much regard due to his laws and institutions, as Christians sometimes pretend. And since we live in an age of most free inquiry, it will highly become all Christians to follow this advice of *Minucius Felix* ; ‘ Let us make a good use of the blessing of divine truth, ‘ let us govern our knowledge with discretion, let superstition and impiety be no more, and let true religion ‘ triumph in their stead.’ Which God grant may be the happy issue of these debates !

CON-

C O N C L U S I O N.

I HAVE now gone through all, that I at first intended, in making remarks upon the several answers to this infidel writer, which have been published by our Pædobaptist brethren; and think it not improper to inform my readers, that the reason, why I have not here shewn from scripture, what is the true way of administering the ordinance of baptism, and who are the proper subjects, for whom only it was designed, is first, because the several authors of those answers have therein plainly and openly given up infant-baptism, as an unscriptural thing, and as such, no part of the christian religion: so that it was quite unnecessary for me to attempt those proofs in making remarks upon their writings. Secondly, because I have already published a treatise upon the subject, wherein the scriptures, relating to that ordinance, are particularly considered; to which I have sometimes referred, and for the fuller satisfaction of all my readers, do here recommend to them, a serious perusal of that tract, intitled, *A supplement to the sermons preached against popery at Salters-Hall*: where they will find, that the commission, our Lord gave his disciples to baptize all nations, relates only to believers; which is confirmed from the general and particular instances recorded in scripture of persons baptized. I have there likewise given the reasons, why it extends to every believer, together with the great benefit it is of to all such, as come to it in the answer of a good conscience. The manner also how it was and ought to be administered, is shewn from the history of the evangelists, the acts of the apostles, and the allusions to Christ's death, burial and resurrection in their epistles. And I have therein answered the various arguments of our brethren for infant baptism, and the objections made against our practice of immersion. I have set forth something of the evil which attends altering the divine institution, and shewn that Protestants have no more power to do so, nor can it be more lawful for them, than it is for Papists. I have supported the whole from antiquity, and many passages taken from the writings of our Pædobaptist brethren; and at last shewn something of the moral obligation, which every believer in Christ is under, of submitting

ting to his institution ; with the use which baptism and the Lord's-Supper are of to promote true piety and strict virtue, as well as to secure us from superstition and infidelity. All which, if duly considered, with the appendix to the last editions in answer to Mr. *Emlyn's* previous question, and what I have here said, will, I hope, be sufficient to convince our Pædobaptist brethren, how necessary a reformation is ; and so induce them to lay aside infant-sprinkling, that unscriptural practice, which, by their own confession, is no part of the christian religion. That thereby they may no longer expose Christianity to the ridicule of Infidels, but may prevent such objections against it for the time to come.

And as the worthy and learned members of our two Universities, together with some eminent ministers of our dissenting brethren, out of their sincere love and pious regard to Christianity, have given up this traditionary practice, in their several defences of our holy religion against the growing and daring infidelity of the age ; I hope there are no Protestants so bigotted to popish corruptions, or mere human ceremonies, as to shew themselves the great enemies of divine revelation, by pretending to vindicate a practice from thence, which is so manifestly injurious to Christianity, as it gives such countenance to the scoffs and derision of deists ; and is so great an encouragement to their infidelity. But,

Finally, considering that these Remarks may possibly fall into the hands of some readers, who have never seen my supplement, I will therefore, for the sake of such, briefly add something for their satisfaction.

And *I think* all that is necessary for a *sufficient, if not the compleat* illustration of this subject, *may be reduced* to one or other of these three heads of inquiry.

What it is to be *baptized into Christ*.

Who, according to the plain sense of the institution itself, the general doctrine of the New Testament, and the general practice of the apostles, are the proper subjects of baptism. And,

Whether it was intended as a temporary institution, and to be confined to proselytes only, or is of universal and perpetual obligation.

As there is a great compass and variety of argument included under each of these heads, I must content myself with giving short sketches, without expatiating on every particular ; but hope however, tho' in an abstract, to
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give obvious and convincing reasons on the side of what I apprehend to be the truth, and a clear confutation of all opposite pretences.

In the first place, what are we to understand by the scripture expression, of *being baptized into Christ*? The general sense is most evidently this, that we are baptized into the solemn profession and acknowledgment of his religion, which he was commissioned by God to reveal and publish, and enabled to confirm and establish by many unquestionable, great, and beneficent miracles: just as the Jews being baptized into *Moses* implied in it, in the sentiment of St. Paul, who made use of that phrase, their owning him as their leader, and his institution to be divine. Thus far the matter seems to be perfectly unperplexed and free from difficulty.

“ And the manner in which this action of *being baptized into Christ*, is to be performed, is also as clear and certain; because from the nature of the institution, there cannot be two different modes of administering one and the same divine ordinance. For the very nature of baptism so necessarily implies dipping, that where aspersion, or perfusion only are made use of, there cannot, in propriety of speech, be any baptism at all, because baptism, and dipping, are the same thing. And the several allusions made to it in scripture, as of a *death, burial, and resurrection*, are a sufficient proof of this; where Christians are said to *be baptized into Christ's death*, with a manifest reference to his being buried and rising again from the grave, and in this sense St. Paul clearly, and strongly expresses himself, over and over again, *Rom. vi.* where it is said, *We are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* And following the metaphor still further he adds; *for if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death: we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.* And again, *Coloss. ii. 12. buried with Christ in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who raised him from the dead.*

The historical accounts also, which we have in scripture of persons baptized, necessarily oblige us to confine our idea of that solemn institution to immersion or dipping only. I shall here only mention two instances. The first is that of our Saviour himself, whose command and example should be the sole rule of every believer's conduct; and

and, with respect to him, St. *Mark* informs us, ch. i. 9, 10, 11. *And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. (or as it might have been truly and better rendered, dipped of John into Jordan) And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the spirit like a dove descending upon him. And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* The other is in the book of the *Acts*, after our Lord's ascension, and sending down the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, which was promised to lead them into all truth, *John* xvi. 13. and by which they were *dued with power from on high*, to confirm their doctrine. And under the influence of this, *Philip* was directed to attend the chariot of the eunuch, and preach the gospel to him ; the issue of which is thus related by St. *Luke*. *And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water : and the eunuch said, see, here is water ; what doth hinder me to be baptized ? And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still : and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch ; and he baptized [or dipped] him. And when they were come up out of the water, the spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the Eunuch saw him no more : and he went on his way rejoicing. Acts viii. 36—39."* This is sufficient, as a general detail of the argument under the first head of inquiry. I now proceed to the second, which is this :

Who are the proper subjects of baptism, and that they are only the adult, upon their making a free and voluntary profession of their faith in Christ, and repentance towards God, is, I think, abundantly confirmed by the whole strain and current of the New Testament. *Of this Gal. iii. 27. in particular* appears to me to afford a manifest and strong demonstration, in which is directly asserted, that *as many*, that is, all without exception ; for St. *Paul* himself does not exclude one single case, and therefore Christians ought not ; however necessary it may be to the support of a favourite scheme, to which they are most zealously and fondly devoted ; in this text, I say, it is directly asserted, that all without exception, who *are baptized into Christ, do put on Christ*. The phrase plainly denotes a voluntary act of their own, an act of piety in the subjects of baptism, and not a forced ty, not a mere external and

and mechanical operation; and consequently, infants are plainly declared, by this passage, to be incapable of baptism, if we proceed rightly, according to the christian rule, because they are incapable of reason, and faith, and free determination. And this interpretation the same apostle has confirmed beyond all contradiction in another place, where he opposes *putting on the Lord Jesus Christ to making provision for the flesh*, representing both as actions equally voluntary, and that relate to a moral character. As to *put on the new man* is explained by *being renewed in the spirit of our mind*; so to *put on Christ* is to take upon us the christian character, and to bind ourselves, in a solemn engagement, to imitate the temper and life of Christ; as all did, if we may give credit to St. Paul, who were baptized in the first age of Christianity, but infants cannot possibly do; and therefore the baptizing such can be regarded in no other light than that of an innovation, absolutely unknown in the apostolical times. And indeed, if we examine the commission itself, which our Lord gave the apostles to baptize, this error of modern Christianity will appear in as full and distinct a view. The commission runs thus, *Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*; where it is obvious to observe, First, that the stated order is to teach, and then to baptize. And, Secondly, that there is no more reason to affirm that all, who were taught, were obliged to be baptized, than that all, who were baptized, were to be previously taught. The text is equally explicit in both cases, and the subjects of both are of exactly the same extent, *all nations*. But I must only suggest hints; and therefore proceed to mention some other texts, which undeniably prove, that the practice of the apostles was strictly conformable to the rule established by their great Lord and master.

Thus, when by St. Peter's first sermon the people, who heard him, were convinced of the sin and infinite danger of their unbelief and stubborn contempt of the gospel, and said to him and to the rest of the apostles, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* His answer was, *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins*. And it is afterwards added, *then they that gladly received his word, were baptized*. In like manner, when the Eunuch, upon a firm persuasion of the truth of Christianity, desired to be admitted to baptism,

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Philip

Philip laid before him the necessary and unalterable condition of his receiving that privilege, in these words, *If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest*. And to suppose, that there are two sorts of qualifications for one and the same ordinance, when no distinction at all is once intimated in any single passage of the New Testament ; nay, to imagine that the qualifications are equally valid, which are as different from each other, as faith, and no faith ; or, which amounts to the same, as knowledge and ignorance, a voluntary profession of Christianity, and the being capable of no religion at all ; this is not only framing an arbitrary scheme, but, in my opinion, an absolutely incoherent and incredible scheme. The nature and ends of baptism as administered to believers, and the nature and ends of it, if it be administered to such as cannot believe, must certainly be as different, as those of any two different ordinances, that we can possibly conceive of. But the nature and uses of christian baptism are always described in one uniform strain, suited to the case of adult believers only, and impossible, by any force or stretch of invention, to be adapted to the state of infants. Upon the whole then, as it is generally acknowledged, that there is no express command for baptizing infants, nor a single precedent to be found in favour of it, throughout the whole New Testament ; so neither is there the least, most obscure, involved, and distant hint, that it had ever been practised, or was in itself allowable. The commission, the examples, the descriptions and accounts relating to baptism, are confined to quite different subjects, and absolutely discourage all such pretensions. Upon what foot then, it may be asked, can a custom, of which there are no traces in the religion of Christ, and which seems, indeed, to be quite alien from the genius and complexion of it, as a rational and moral institution ; upon what foot, I say, can this custom be defended, by so many upright, and, in other respects, judicious Christians, who profess to take the gospel for the only rule of christian order and worship ?

I answer, that our brethren themselves are not rightly and thoroughly agreed upon the fundamental principle, on which to raise and establish their scheme. Some talk of the *Abrahamic* covenant, which they stile *the covenant of grace*, the same in substance with the dispensation of the gospel ; and that as infants were admitted to circumcision, which they make the seal of this *Abrahamic* covenant

nant of grace, they must, by a parity of reason, have a right to baptism; since it cannot be conceived that their privileges are retrenched, but it may rather be expected, that they would be considerably enlarged under a religion, which is the completion of all others, and contains the fullest and brightest displays of the grace and tender mercies of God. The following remarks will, I apprehend, be abundantly sufficient to shew, that this is a foundation much too weak to uphold the superstructure that has been erected upon it, and a principle clogged with heavy and unsurmountable difficulties.

1. What they call the *Abrahamic* covenant does not appear to have any thing in it like a *covenant*. It was only a *promise*, by way of prediction, of blessings that would be derived to the faithful, from *Abraham's* seed, in future, and far, far distant ages. It was not a stipulation of blessings, as this strange and perplexed notion of a covenant implies; it was not, I say, a stipulation of blessings, which *Abraham* himself would ever live to see or enjoy; but of a privilege, not designed to be communicated till the times of the *Messiah*. And tho' this is declared, by *St. Paul*, to be a *preaching the gospel to Abraham*, it is only in a more improper and figurative sense: just as many prophecies and promises of the Old Testament might be said to be *preaching the gospel*, long before that holy and most spiritual institution commenced, to the whole *Jewish* nation.

2. Circumcision is never stiled the seal of any covenant, but if it belonged to the covenant of grace, it was a seal not at all necessary with respect even to such, as are allowed to have been really interested in that covenant. For all females were utterly excluded from it, without any the least prejudice, I would hope, to their spiritual and eternal concerns. If infants therefore are excluded from baptism, they also may sustain no damage. So that the whole of this plea for infants is a heap of confusion and inconsistency; and all the warm and pathetic exclamations, that are so often mixed with it, are mere dismal sounds, that have no energy in them, can never convince the truly considerate and divested of all prejudice, nor answer any valuable purpose. Infants are as safe, their privileges as entire, and their state as good, upon this principle, without baptism, as with it; as that of one half of the *Jewish* nation was without circumcision. Why then should they be forced, without their consent, to undergo

what is called the ordinance of baptism, without any encouragement from, and against the plain rules and examples of, the New Testament ? But,

3. What has been offered under the foregoing head affords, I think, a strong probability that circumcision had, and could have, no relation at all to the covenant of grace, but only to the peculiar immunities of the race and descendants of *Abraham*. For did the great God, whose tender mercies are over all his works, enter into a covenant relation with the males only ? Or if an instituted seal of the covenant be such an extraordinary privilege, as our brethren profess it to be, could not one have been instituted, that would have discovered universal and more impartial goodness ; that might have been equally a seal to all that were included within the terms of the imagined covenant ? But,

Finally, and to dismiss this topic, that circumcision could not belong to the covenant of grace, or to the gospel preached to *Abraham*, is manifest, even to a demonstration, from what *St. Paul* has so strenuously asserted, and copiously argued, in his epistle to the *Galatians* ; where he refers it entirely to what, in the language of school-divinity, is stiled the covenant of works, according to the strict tenor of which, no man could reasonably hope for salvation. *If, says this great apostle, ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.* (which law ran in this fearful, rigid strain, *Cursed is every one, that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them,* Gal. iii. 10.) *Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law ; ye are fallen from grace.* Gal. v. 2, 3, 5. By these, it is likely, and other considerations of a like nature, several of our Pædobaptist brethren have been so struck and convinced, that they have deserted the old foundation, and built upon a new one ; and that is, the custom of baptizing proselytes and their children, in use, as they say, before our Saviour's coming, amongst the *Jews*, and which he intended his disciples should imitate. To which I shall only say, First, that if this be a good argument for infant-baptism, it must hold equally strong for baptizing none but proselytes and their children. Secondly, that our Lord, by instituting baptism only for disciples instructed and believing, has plainly discovered, that he intended different subjects of baptism from those, which this argument

ment pretends the *Jews* admitted. And, Thirdly, that there is no ground in history for supposing, that the *Jews* had any such established custom in the ancient times here supposed. The Old Testament is absolutely silent about it; so is the Apocrypha, so is the New Testament, so are *Josephus* and *Philo*, grave and credible historians, who professedly treat of the antiquities and ceremonies of the *Jews*. *Josephus*, in relating two cases of proselytism, mentions circumcision only, and gives not the least intimation about a baptism. The most early christian writers appear to have had no knowledge of it. *St. Paul*, for a prelude to christian baptism, fixes on the *Israelites* being baptized in the cloud, and in the sea, instead of hinting at this *Jewish* baptism; which, if it was really the model of that appointed by Christ, he had the fairest opportunity in the world of introducing some account of, and could scarce have failed to introduce. Upon what ground then, it may be asked, have learned men advanced and propagated a notion, that seems so little credible? I answer, upon the bare authority of Talmudical books, not composed till about three hundred years after Christ, and stuffed with blasphemies, full of stupid infatuation and wild romance, and upon whose credit, if it was not invalidated by what has been already offered, no man, who wishes not to be imposed upon, would ever rely. And are these principles, from which to deduce duties of religion, on which to found positive institutions of God? If *Jewish* legends are to be the ground work of christian duties, the whole face of the gospel may in time be so mangled, and disfigured, as to bear nothing at all of the aspect of primitive and unadulterate Christianity. The last inquiry which I proposed is,

Whether baptism was intended as a temporary institution, and to be confined to proselytes only, or be of universal and perpetual obligation? And this is reduced to narrow limits, by my having already rendered highly improbable, the principle on which it has been chiefly attempted to be established, namely, the ancient practice, long before Christ, of *Jewish* proselyte baptism. I shall therefore only observe further; that whether any institution of Christianity be temporary, or whether it ought to be confined to some particular characters, can only be known one or other of these three ways: either by the express words of the institution itself; or from the nature of

of the thing, and the manifest design of it; or from the practice of Christ and his Apostles.

The first of these can, I think, never fully determine either of the two points; but if the words of the institution are either way conclusive, it is, most undoubtedly, on the side of the perpetual duration of baptism, and the universal extent of its obligation. And if we consult the nature and uses of this ordinance, we shall find nothing that can lead us to conclude, that it was designed to be only temporary, or to be confined to proselytes. On the contrary, all the uses of it, that are specified in scripture, and the several expressions, by which the true nature of it is there represented, appear to me to be equally applicable to every age of the church, and to all the believers of Christianity. Take baptism either as a public profession of the christian religion, by a certain significant rite, which I take to be, in good part, the meaning of St. Paul, that *as many as are baptized into Christ, do put on Christ*; or consider it in St. Peter's notion of it, as *the answer of a good conscience towards God*; or if it be properly described by the modern stile of a visible admission into the christian church: I can see no reason, why it may not be as useful to one sort of Christians as to another; nor, consequently, why the use of it should be limited to proselytes only. And in the practice of Christ and his apostles, which must now be considered as the only possible foundation of this opinion, there is as little ground for it: for how should we expect to meet with an account of the baptism of any but proselytes in the history of the *Acts*, which regards the first propagation of Christianity, and the converts made to it, but gives very little account of the regulation and state of christian churches, after they were planted and established; or in the *Epistles*, which were either written, upon some particular incidents, that happened in the churches; or against dangerous errors that prevailed; or to give necessary instructions in cases of exigency, and suited to particular characters; but not to describe, minutely and fully, the constitution and practice of the church?

Upon the whole, since there is so great reason to believe, that the ordinance of baptism is of authority and force in all ages, and with respect to all Christians; let us honour God, by readily submitting to this law, which
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he hath prescribed. And to those, in particular, who are fully convinced of their duty, but have hitherto failed in this part of their obedience, I beg leave to address myself in the words of *Ananias to Saul*, Acts xxii. 16. with which I shall conclude. *And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and [sincerely repenting] wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*

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